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FORTY-FIFTH SESSION
Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
6th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 30 October 1990
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KARUKUBIRO-KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda)

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AGENDA ITEM 74: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)

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9 November 1990

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 74: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (*continued*) (A/45/13 and Add.1, 382, 429, 463-466, 530, 641, 645 and 646; A/SPC/45/L.5)

1. Mr. HOQOQ (Afghanistan) said that Israel's policy of expansion had brought violence to Palestine and deprived the Palestinian people of their right to live at peace in their homeland. Hundreds had been left dead and thousands injured as a result of Israel's iron-fist policy. Efforts to settle Jewish immigrants in Palestinian territory, in violation of the Charter and other international instruments, were a grave source of tension and undermined peace endeavours.

2. A just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine was possible only on the basis of full realization of the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, including the establishment of their own State, and withdrawal by Israel from the occupied territories. The only constructive option lay in convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices with the full participation of those concerned, including the Palestinians on an equal footing.

3. His delegation emphasized the importance of strengthening the education system in the occupied territories, and of establishing the University of Jerusalem "Al-Quds" for Palestine refugees. His Government supported increased contributions for UNRWA and urged the specialized agencies to provide greater assistance to it.

4. Mr. NAIMI-ARFA (Islamic Republic of Iran) stated his country's deep concern over the situation in occupied Palestine, where an atmosphere of fear and insecurity prevailed.

5. The report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/45/13 and Add.1) detailed the disruption of education by Israeli forces, which had closed training centres and schools, imposed curfews and used force against students. In addition, health conditions left much to be desired in many refugee camps, where fewer families had been able to satisfy their basic needs, sometimes because of death, injury or detention of the breadwinner. Heavy demands had been placed on the Agency's social services during the reporting period.

6. The privileges and immunities of UNRWA staff continued to be violated by the occupying Power. Many had been intimidated and subjected to physical abuse while performing official duties. There had been many instances of intrusion into and occupation of Agency installations.

7. Although UNRWA had originally been established on a temporary basis, the continued occupation of Palestinian territory had necessitated the renewal of its mandate, and it seemed that the Zionist régime intended to continue its repressive policies, which would require further measures by UNRWA.

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(Mr. Naimi-Arfa, Islamic Republic of Iran)

8. His Government would spare no efforts to assist the oppressed people of Palestine and restore their lost rights. The Islamic Republic of Iran had recently adopted legislation specifically intended to provide financial aid to Palestinians. His Government approved the extension of UNRWA's mandate so that it could continue to alleviate the plight of the Palestinians. Nevertheless, the international community must act to restore their legitimate rights, including the right to establish an independent State in Palestine.

9. Mr. KHANI (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his country continued to be deeply concerned that the Palestine refugee issue remained unresolved despite the adoption of numerous United Nations resolutions on the matter. Those resolutions remained unimplemented because of the hostile attitude adopted by Israel and because of its policies of expansion, building new settlements in the occupied Arab territories for the absorption of new Jewish immigrants and preventing the Palestinian people from exercising its inalienable rights, including its right to return, to exercise self-determination and to establish an independent, sovereign State on the soil of its homeland. It was the United Nations that was responsible for the plight of the refugees, and it was for the United Nations to devise a solution on the basis of the resolutions adopted since 1948.

10. The Syrian Arab Republic wished to reiterate its refusal to accept the Commissioner-General's practice of showing his report in draft form to the Israeli authorities and giving consideration to their comments, while no similar account was taken of the view of the Arab host countries. The Commissioner-General must maintain contacts with the Arab host countries in the preparation of his report, as had been the practice in the past.

11. The report made no mention of General Assembly resolutions 194 (III) and 513 (VI) or of other relevant United Nations resolutions and, in the view of his country, it remained incomplete without such references. The report also showed no interest in the financial sacrifices made by the Arab host countries, which amounted to sums that far exceeded all the annual contributions made to the Agency.

12. In view of the grave situation in the Agency's fields of operation, relief activities must be speedily resumed in response to the relevant General Assembly resolutions and should not be restricted to so-called special hardship cases. There was also a need to redefine special hardship cases so that a greater number of refugees could benefit from the basic services of the Agency.

13. His country did not oppose the provision of any services to refugees that might be of benefit to them provided that none were adversely affected by such services or deprived of the Agency's other services. It followed that, in the implementation of self-support projects, participants should not be deprived of relief or other services provided by UNRWA. Some of the principles on which the Agency based its policies were detrimental to large numbers of refugees and should be re-examined. They included the reassignment of refugees from a category in

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(Ms. Thomsen, Canada)

26. The Agency had given due priority to education, notwithstanding severe disruption by the Israeli authorities. The denial of education was unacceptable to the Canadian Government. Access to education for Palestinian children remained the best hope for a better future for the region. The Agency's health programmes also deserved recognition. Refugee children received a level of basic health care of remarkable quality despite miserable conditions. Her Government remained committed to supporting UNRWA's invaluable humanitarian efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

27. Mr. JELBAN (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the report of the Commissioner-General illustrated the continuing plight of an entire people living at subsistence levels on paltry and unpredictable contributions. The financial basis of the Agency was fragile and it depended on a limited number of donors, so that the level of services it could provide was under threat. UNRWA had been established in order to meet the requirements of an emergency situation arising out of a conspiracy hatched against the Palestinian people, and it had been viewed as an interim means of providing assistance to that people. It was the responsibility of the international community to ensure the continuation of such assistance until such time as a just solution was found.

28. Consideration of the agenda item before the Committee represented only one aspect of the question of Palestine and should not distract attention from its other aspects, all of which must be addressed. The land and property of the Palestinian people had been taken from it and a life of dispersion imposed upon it by virtue of a conspiracy of the powers of evil, represented by Zionist groups scattered throughout the world and supported by the forces of colonialism. Those States that had assisted in the dispersal of the people of Palestine bore full responsibility for its plight. They persisted in their policy of seeking to liquidate the Palestinian people by providing full support to the Zionist entity, by supplying that entity with the most up-to-date weapons so as to keep the Palestinian people in a state of intimidation and by supporting the settlement of waves of immigrants in the occupied Palestinian territory.

29. His delegation felt that the Commissioner-General should have thrown more light on the plight of the Palestine refugees, on the increased number of killings, on the repressive measures adopted, on the intentional destruction of property and homes and on the campaigns of arrest carried out by the Zionist occupation authorities against the Palestinian people.

30. Ms. RASMUSSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, (Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark) said that the task facing UNRWA was as difficult now as at the time of its establishment. There was an urgent need for a political solution of the Middle East question. The best way to reach a negotiated settlement would be to convene the International Peace Conference under United Nations auspices with the participation of all parties concerned.

31. The uprising continued in the occupied territories, where violence had reached a dangerous intensity in recent weeks. Over the period covered by the Commissioner-General's report (A/45/13), some 250 Palestinians had been killed and

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(Ms. Rasmussen, Denmark)

more than 20,000 wounded. The Nordic countries condemned the violence used by the Israeli forces. Israeli violations of UNRWA's privileges and immunities were also of concern. The Israeli Government must facilitate, not hinder, the Agency's valuable work.

32. The Nordic countries noted the reports of aggression against the Agency on the part of some Palestinians in Lebanon. Their Governments warned against such harassment and urged all parties in Lebanon to seek reconciliation.

33. UNRWA's education programme was of particular importance. Regrettably, all the Agency's programmes suffered from a lack of funding. The financial situation for the year ahead seemed very grim. Words were not enough; all countries, including the countries of the region, must make contributions to UNRWA. The Nordic countries had contributed some $53 million in 1990, in addition to support for emergency and special activities.

34. Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria) said that as long as the Palestinian problem had not been solved within the framework of a comprehensive political solution, the role of UNRWA as the main provider of education, health and welfare services and emergency relief would remain indispensable. War inevitably generated disabilities, and it was tragic to note from the Commissioner-General's report (A/45/13) that there were no UNRWA rehabilitation facilities in Lebanon or in Gaza despite the demand. Those disabled as a result of the violence must not be short-changed. The report highlighted the need for extraordinary measures of general assistance and protection in the occupied territories, which had included the assignment of international staff as refugee affairs officers. The increased mistreatment of UNRWA staff and unauthorized entry into Agency premises must be strongly condemned.

35. The Agency's funding base remained narrow, and broadening it became even more necessary in the light of recent events and additional demands for assistance. In addition to its regular contribution for 1990, Austria had made a special contribution towards the emergency programme in the occupied territories.

36. Mr. JERKIC (Yugoslavia) said that the Commissioner-General's report elicited mixed feelings. On one hand, his delegation was pleased to note that the Agency was carrying out its difficult assignments successfully. On the other hand, it was unacceptable that it had proved impossible to find solutions to those problems after so many years. The recent Israeli use of firearms was just one example of the brutal measures of the occupying authorities during the reporting period.

37. The *intifadah* of the Palestinian people had placed additional strain on UNRWA resources, but the Agency had proved its capacity to meet requirements often transcending its original mandate. The Gulf crisis had further increased tension and instability in the region as well as the flow of refugees. UNRWA activities had always been characterized by exemplary economy and rational use of resources. It was, therefore, very important that all countries fulfilled their financial obligations towards UNRWA and also endeavoured to contribute to the emergency fund.

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(Mr. Jerkic, Yugoslavia)

38. In conclusion, he reiterated the urgent need to convene the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices as called for in General Assembly resolution 44/42. Such action was the only way to bring about a lasting and just solution and an end to the long suffering of the Palestinian people.

39. Mr. OTHMAN (Malaysia) said that the question before the Committee was a stark reminder of the failure of the international community to resolve one of the most unsettling political and humanitarian issues of current times. Israel must face the reality that the inalienable right of the Palestinians to a homeland could not be ignored, and must take immediate steps to co-operate with the rest of the international community in seeking a just, comprehensive and lasting solution.

40. The repressive measures employed by the Israeli authorities were unacceptable by any norms of human behaviour. The brutal response to the *intifadah* had made the task of international relief agencies even more crucial. UNRWA in particular faced mounting pressure to provide vital services for Palestine refugees, many of whom had been uprooted again. His delegation was alarmed at the heavy toll of casualties during the reporting period, the result of excessive use of force by Israeli security forces. The report also had drawn attention to repeated violations of UNRWA premises and harassment of staff. Even ambulances carrying injured persons were interfered with. His delegation once again called upon Israel to fulfil its obligations under the fourth Geneva Convention to extend full co-operation to UNRWA and to respect its privileges and immunities.

41. Malaysia commended the selfless dedication of the Commissioner-General and his staff, despite the risks to their lives and safety. His delegation shared the concern about funding prospects for 1991, in particular the disturbing shortfall of funding for emergency programmes. Such programmes were vital, and their reduction could have disturbing consequences. Apart from its regular contributions to UNRWA, his Government had also made direct contributions to the Palestinians through the Palestine Liberation Organization, in the form of voluntary contributions for humanitarian purposes from Malaysians of all walks of life. His delegation supported the recommendations of the Working Group as contained in its report (A/45/645).

42. While UNRWA was doing all it could within its available resources, its role in the occupied territory could be further strengthened in order to enhance the safety of Palestinians there. His delegation called upon Israel to honour UNRWA's privileges and immunities, especially the freedom of movement of its personnel and the inviolability of its premises. Malaysia looked forward to the Secretary-General's report on the ways and means of ensuring the safety of Palestinian civilians under Israeli occupation, as recently requested by the Security Council in its resolution 673 (1990).

43. Mr. WAN Jingzhang (China) said that while his delegation fully supported the work of UNRWA, it noted with regret that the Agency still faced enormous difficulties. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Agency's privileges and immunities had been increasingly disregarded by Israel, which must comply strictly with its obligations under the United Nations Charter and international law.

44. In addition to continued support for the work of UNRWA, an early, fair and reasonable political settlement must be sought. The instability in the Middle East constituted a direct threat to world peace. China favoured a political settlement which would provide for Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories under its occupation, mutual recognition between the State of Palestine and the State of Israel, and the harmonious co-existence of the Arab and Jewish peoples. His delegation supported the convening of an international conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices.

45. Mr. POSSO SERRANO (Ecuador) said it was clear from the report of UNRWA that the situation in the occupied territories had worsened despite the dedication of the Commissioner-General and his staff. It appeared that the Israeli authorities were pursuing a policy of systematic aggression and interference with UNRWA workers and installations. A vicious circle had been established: Israeli officials tried to justify harsh repression because of the uprising, but such a reaction was understandable, since the Palestinian people were persecuted and their basic rights denied.

46. The Gulf crisis had been a severe blow to the Palestine refugees, since many of their host countries faced major problems in reintegrating their own nationals forced to return because of the conflict.

47. The situation of the refugees should be temporary; it was illogical that a human being could be considered a refugee for life, and even worse that he could be denied the chance to change those circumstances for his descendants. UNRWA should be strengthened so that it could continue to provide its humanitarian services without the limitations due to lack of funds. The United Nations should not forget the plight of those refugees and should maintain and increase its support for the Agency, which aided a group of human beings who had suffered through no fault of their own and continued to suffer because of lack of attention on the part of the United Nations.

48. His delegation placed special importance on humanitarian programmes and felt that their effectiveness should be a priority matter, not only because the prestige of the Organization was at stake but also because of its obligations of conscience. His delegation, while praising the sacrifices made by UNRWA, urged the continued search for a permanent and durable solution. The convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East under United Nations auspices would be a clear demonstration of the desire to resolve that chronic problem.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-FIFTH SESSION
Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
7th meeting
held on
Thursday, 1 November 1990
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KARUKUBIRO-KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda)

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AGENDA ITEM 74: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued)

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7 November 1990

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 74: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/45/13 and Add.1, 382, 429, 463-6, 530, 641, 645 and 646; A/SPC/45/L.5)

1. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) regretted that the situation in the Middle East had been marked by distinctly negative developments in the past year. That applied most particularly to the living conditions of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza strip, as could be seen in the report of the Commissioner-General (A/45/13). His delegation was deeply concerned at the escalation of violence used against the Palestinian population, including killings, mass arrests, deportations and the destruction of houses. The Soviet Union condemned the growing number of violations of Agency rights, privileges and immunities, the intrusions of the Israeli authorities on UNRWA premises, schools and hospitals, the threat of physical violence against Agency staff and the interference in the humanitarian activities of that body.

2. His Government attached great importance to the work of UNRWA in providing emergency assistance to Palestine refugees in the area of health, education and social welfare. It commended the Commissioner-General's efforts to protect the Palestinians and, in particular, his sending of additional staff and his diplomatic activities in connection with the Israeli authorities' violations of international norms of human rights. The Soviet Union was pleased that, despite the extreme circumstances, the Agency had been able to extend assistance to thousands of refugees currently in Jordan as a result of the Persian Gulf crisis.

3. The Soviet Union had been stepping up its co-operation with UNRWA. The Soviet Committee for Solidarity with the Countries of Asia and Africa had decided to provide, through the Agency, material assistance on a yearly basis to the population of the occupied territories and to grant fellowships in 1991-1992 to a group of Palestinian students to study at Soviet universities.

4. The events in Jerusalem on 8 October 1990 and the resulting wave of violence in the occupied Arab territories had exacerbated the already explosive situation in the Middle East and created additional obstacles to the peace process and a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was unfortunate that the Government of Israel had refused to comply with the provisions of the resolutions recently adopted by the Security Council and had not allowed the Secretary-General to send a mission to examine ways and means of ensuring the safety of the Palestinian population.

5. In view of the changes taking place in the world, the international community could not accept that Israel, flying in the face of political realism, continued to rely on force in its treatment of the Palestinian population. The current situation in the occupied territories made it essential for the United Nations to take decisive steps to ensure better protection for the rights of the Palestinians and to put an end to the economic, social and cultural discrimination of the

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population. The Soviet Union expressed its solidarity with the intifadah, which was testimony to the determination of the Palestinian people to achieve full realization of its inalienable national rights. His Government was in favour of taking active steps to launch a peace process in the Middle East and to seek real progress towards convening an International Conference with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and the five permanent members of the Security Council. The Soviet Union was convinced that such a conference could, on the basis of a balance of interests, bring about a comprehensive settlement of the whole range of Middle East problems and contribute to strengthening peace and stability in the region.

6. Mr. MAKKAWI (Lebanon) expressed his Government's appreciation for the valuable work performed by the Agency in providing education, health and relief services to the more than two million Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic, Jordan, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Lebanon.

7. Over the past year, acute political, economic and financial problems had been added to the Agency's burden. Firstly, the Israeli authorities had increasingly interfered with the Agency's operations, disregarding its privileges and immunities in a deliberate attempt to assert control over UNRWA operations. Secondly, the loss of income of the growing numbers of Palestinians who had returned to Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic because of the events in the Gulf had increased the strain on the Agency's health and welfare services. Thirdly, the financial difficulties of UNRWA had been compounded in 1990 by a sharp drop in the funding of the emergency programme in Lebanon and the occupied territories. Clearly, an emergency situation had developed that must be addressed as a matter of urgency, and Lebanon appealed to donor countries to support the Agency's work by providing early pledges so that resource planning could be made more predictable.

8. Lebanon was host country to a large part of the total Palestine refugee population, and the welfare of those guests were of utmost concern to it. His Government gratefully acknowledged Agency accomplishments in Lebanon in the fields of education, health and relief and social services. During the 15 years of turmoil in Lebanon, UNRWA had had to work under precarious conditions aggravated by continuous Israeli air and land raids and invasion. Regrettably, the Agency's activities in Lebanon had also been affected in 1990 by inter-factional strife among Palestinian groups.

9. The best guarantee for the safety and protection of all civilians in Lebanon, Lebanese and non-Lebanese alike, was the speedy restoration of Lebanese authority through its army, police and governmental institutions. A system based on a judiciary and legislation adopted by a free parliament was the only way to achieve that end. The reunification of the Lebanese army, police and security forces, together with the Government institutions, was a major new development that provided Lebanon with the means of implementing its laws and extending its authority over its entire territory and would ensure the Agency's safe and effective operation. It was to be hoped that UNRWA would resume its full presence in Lebanon and continue its valuable activities.

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10. *Mr. SUMI* (Japan) said that the Agency's efforts deserved the international community's profound admiration, especially in view of the extremely difficult circumstances under which they were carried out. That situation had been exacerbated by recent events in the Gulf region and, more directly, by the wave of violence in East Jerusalem, which had resulted in the death of numerous Palestinians and a further escalation of tension between the Palestinian people and the Israeli authorities in the occupied territories. Japan condemned the excessive use of force by the Israeli authorities and urged Israel to comply with international law in its treatment of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. His delegation also deplored Israel's refusal to receive the Secretary-General's fact-finding mission as called for in Security Council resolutions 672 (1990) and 673 (1990). The situation in the region underscored the urgent need to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East, which could only be attained through swift and complete implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and through recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, including the right to establish an independent State. If peace was to come to the Middle East, it was also necessary to resolve the problem of Lebanon.

11. In his report (A/45/13), the Commissioner General had presented a disturbing picture of UNRWA's financial difficulties, brought about by increased demands on its resources for emergency food, health and relief assistance. There were currently 2.5 million people under the Agency's direct responsibility, and UNRWA's activities would continue to be necessary as long as there were Palestine refugees. A major donor country since 1953, Japan's contributions in cash, kind and other assistance over the years amounted to approximately $US 182 million. His Government was determined to continue to extend financial support to the best of its ability.

12. The donor countries of UNRWA did not regard the Agency as a mechanism for maintaining the political *status quo* in the Middle East. They supported UNRWA because they recognized its vital role in providing humanitarian assistance and bringing a measure of stability to the troubled region. The financial capacity of the Agency's traditional donor countries was not unlimited, and UNRWA must therefore continue to appeal to countries that had not already done so to become donor countries and thus share the costs of the Agency's crucially important work.

13. Japan joined the international community in condemning the assault on the Rimal Health Centre by the Israeli authorities on 12 June 1990. His delegation again called upon Israel to desist from obstructing the Agency's activities and urged all parties concerned in the area where the Agency was active to extend to it as much co-operation and support as possible.

14. Japan regarded the educational opportunities available to Palestinian young people as particularly important. In 1990, it would provide vocational training in Japan to 15 Palestinians and dispatch experts to a vocational training centre in Jordan. To date, 64 Palestinians had participated in vocational training programmes in Japan since the programme's inception in 1985.

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15. Japan's assistance to educational programmes continued to bear fruit. In addition to the Jerash Elementary/Preparatory Boy's School in 1989, the construction of a similar school for girls had been completed in 1990, and schools at four other locations were currently under construction. Japan had contributed $US 1 million for university scholarships to Palestine refugee students in the occupied territories, to be spread over a five-year period, during which time it would help support 160 university students throughout the course of their university studies.

16. Mr. SINGH (India) said that his delegation shared the Commissioner-General's concern at the increasing violations of UNRWA staff privileges and immunities and unauthorized intrusions into Agency premises by the Israeli authorities. India commended UNRWA for continuing its regular and emergency assistance programmes despite adverse conditions, particularly in Lebanon, and the increasing obstruction on the part of the Israeli occupying authorities.

17. The Agency served as a stabilizing influence in the Middle East. The essential humanitarian services that it provided must not be curtailed in any way for want of funds. His delegation was alarmed about the shortage of funds for emergency programmes and the likely difficulties in the future referred to in the report (A/45/13). That disturbing prospect underlined the importance of continuing resource mobilization efforts, particularly since the expenditure on regular programmes was rising steadily with the increase in the refugee population.

18. India had been contributing regularly to UNRWA since its very inception. It had also provided for a number of scholarships, training programmes and occupational training courses for Palestinians under various programmes. But the Agency's services could be no substitute for the right of the Palestinians to live in freedom and dignity in their own national homeland. The problem was basically political and not humanitarian, the root cause being the persistent denial of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people. India paid tribute to the heroic people of Palestine in its valiant struggle to attain those rights. The only way to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people was through a just and comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict based on Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied by it since 1967, including Jerusalem, the realization by the Palestinian people of its inalienable right to self-determination, including its right to its own homeland, and the recognition of the right of all States in the region, including Palestine and Israel, to live in peace within secure and recognized borders. In order to achieve those goals, it was necessary to convene the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, with the participation of all parties concerned, including the PLO.

19. Mr. AL-SUWAIDI (United Arab Emirates) said that it was clear from the reports on the item before the Committee that no appreciable progress had been made in solving the problem of the Palestine refugees. There had rather been a deterioration in their living conditions as a result of the arbitrary measures taken against them by Israel. By military order, 90 of the 98 schools in the West Bank had been closed during the reporting period, and the hostile measures taken by

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(Mr. Al-Suwaidi, United Arab Emirates)

the Israeli security forces had had a far-reaching impact on UNRWA health services in the occupied territories. The reaction of the Israeli authorities to the *intifadah* had caused an enormous increase in the number of families no longer able to meet their own basic needs. Israel had also adopted the practice of taking innocent hostages, a practice reminiscent of that of the Nazis and Fascists during the Second World War and one that had been condemned and outlawed by the entire civilized world. The temporary detention of young people had been used as a form of economic pressure, and innocent parties had been made to suffer until suspected individuals turned themselves in.

20. The privileges and immunities of UNRWA had been increasingly disregarded, and greater administrative restrictions had been placed on the Agency's operations which had limited the freedom of movement of staff members and enforced new and time-consuming clearance procedures for activities that used to be carried out within the Agency's own authority.

21. The suffering of the refugees had been intensified and their numbers increased by the departure of tens of thousands of Palestinians from Kuwait as a result of the Iraqi invasion of a country that had opened its doors to them and assisted them in all aspects of their lives. A fourth exodus of Palestine refugees had thus been added to those from Palestine in 1948, from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 and from Lebanon in 1982. It had been hoped that Iraq would assist the Palestinians rather than adding to their sufferings and aggravating their plight.

22. Mr. KADRAT (Iraq), speaking on a point of order, said that he wished to remind the speaker that the item before the Committee was the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Remarks should be addressed to that item only.

23. The CHAIRMAN said that members of the Committee should confine their remarks to the item under discussion.

24. Mr. AL-SUWAIDI (United Arab Emirates) said that the only just solution to the problem of the Palestine refugees required their return to the homes and property of which they had been forcibly deprived in 1948. That was the solution that had been endorsed by the General Assembly in paragraph 11 of its resolution 194 (III), which stated that the refugees had a right to return or to receive compensation. That was an absolute right and one that had been confirmed at every subsequent session of the General Assembly. The report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (A/45/382), instead of explaining the fact that the necessary steps had not been taken towards the implementation of paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) in the light of circumstances and events in the region, should have mentioned the real reason, namely Israel's refusal to implement it and allow the Palestine refugees to exercise their right to return.

25. Article 13, paragraph 2, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country". It was strange that Israel, the Zionists and certain States that

(Mr. Al-Suwaidi, United Arab Emirates)

supported Israel should call for the emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union and their settlement in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory on the basis of the first half of that statement, and that they should ignore the second half when it was a question of the right of the Palestinians to return to their country. Israel's claim that the refugees left Palestine at the instigation of the Arab leaders had been thoroughly refuted by the evidence and testimony brought before the Committee by the Arab delegations in past years. Instead of speaking of the financial difficulties facing the Agency in fulfilling its responsibilities to the Palestine refugees, delegations should rather bring pressure to bear on Israel to see to it that the refugees received the revenues derived from the properties that they had left in Palestine, which amounted to several times the annual budget of the Agency.

26. The sufferings of the Palestinian people had exceeded those of any other people in contemporary history, and the time had come to solve the problem in all of its aspects, including the refugee problem. The solution was clear: the Palestinians should be accorded the right to return, to exercise self-determination and to establish a Palestinian State on the soil of Palestine.

27. Mr. AL-SABAH (Kuwait) said that his delegation wished to express its particular gratitude to the Commissioner-General and staff of UNRWA for the humanitarian services they had provided to those who had been compelled to leave Kuwait for reasons beyond that country's control. Overnight, those people had lost all that they owned and their dreams and those of their families had been destroyed.

28. Mr. KADRAT (Iraq), speaking on a point of order, said that the speaker should confine his remarks to the agenda item before the Committee. That was agenda item 74, and comments on matters that had no connection with that item were out of order.

29. The CHAIRMAN said that he would like to appeal to all delegations to confine their remarks to the agenda item before the Committee.

30. Mr. AL-SABAH (Kuwait) said that the State of Kuwait had hosted in its territory hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who were not registered with UNRWA as refugees. Kuwait had provided them with a decent livelihood, with educational, health and social welfare services and with opportunities for employment that enabled them to meet their own needs and remit surplus amounts to their families in other countries. The Government and people of Kuwait were deeply pained at the fate of the Palestinians that had been with them in Kuwait at the time of the brutal Iraqi occupation.

31. At a time when it was going through the gravest crisis in its history as a result of the Iraqi occupation and the consequent destruction that had affected all of its citizens and residents, Kuwait was all the more insistent on the need to provide assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. It would do all that it could to relieve the burdens of its Palestinian brothers under Israeli occupation.

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(Mr. Al-Sabah, Kuwait)

32. The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait had created new complications that would inevitably have an adverse impact on the standard of living of Palestinians both within and outside the occupied Palestinian territory and, in particular, on that of the refugees. Before the occupation, Kuwait had been giving serious consideration to increasing its contributions to UNRWA and, together with its colleagues in the League of Arab States, had been endeavouring to increase the Arab contribution in general. Kuwait had also been considerating the project proposed by UNRWA in co-operation with the World Health Organization for the construction of a general hospital in Gaza, and it would examine the optimum way in which it could still contribute to that vital and important project.

33. Kuwait had contributed to UNRWA even before it was admitted as a Member of the United Nations, it had continued to make its annual contribution, and it had responded to emergency appeals by supporting educational institutions and hospitals in the occupied territories. To the extent possible under the weight of the brutal Iraqi occupation, it would continue to contribute to the alleviation of the plight of the Palestinian people until such time as it secured the full exercise of its legitimate rights.

34. Mr. AL-KHULAIFI (Qatar) said that the Palestine refugees continued to live in the difficult conditions that they had experienced since Israel had occupied their land and seized their property. In those circumstances, UNRWA was attempting to perform its humanitarian role, to provide emergency assistance and to protect the lives of the Palestine refugees despite the obstacles placed in its way by the Israeli occupation authorities. The Agency had also faced difficulties as a result of the naval blockade imposed on East Beirut and the fighting in various parts of Lebanon.

35. Since, day after day and year after year, the hope of a just solution to their cause had become dimmer, the Palestinians had had no option but to launch the intifadah within their occupied land, thereby declaring their rejection of subjection and surrender. They had offered up their martyrs on a massive scale, providing the most splendid examples of courage and sacrifice of the current era and showing irrefutable proof that they would not accept any alternative to the exercise of their legitimate rights on the soil of their own homeland and would never abandon the aims of their struggle against the Israeli occupation forces.

36. The situation of the refugees had been aggravated by the financial crisis of the Agency and the displacement of tens of thousands of Palestine refugees who had fled from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, thereby bringing to a halt the remittances that had helped to improve the situation of their families in the occupied territories. That had also increased the difficulties faced by the Agency, which had found itself obliged to care for even larger numbers of refugees.

37. It was astonishing that, while the world was making rapid progress towards international reconciliation and peace and great efforts were being made for the resolution of many regional problems and conflicts, the Palestine issue continued to be discussed at the United Nations to no avail. Peace was indivisible, and it

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(Mr. Al-Khulaifi, Qatar)

could not be achieved in one region while it remained an intractable problem in another. Israel must change its inflexible stance, and its rejection of Security Council resolution 672 (1990) was only the most recent indication of its intransigence and its contempt for the role of the international community.

38. In 1950, the number of registered refugees had been about 914,000, and today it was close to two and a half million. Every year, the Agency suffered from a financial deficit that had an adverse impact on its operations. Member States must contribute generously and in a timely fashion so that the Agency could implement its social and other programmes in order to mitigate the sufferings of the Palestinian people until such time as the issue was settled by the restoration to the Palestinian people of its inalieanble rights so that it could establish its own State in its own land like all the other peoples of the world.

39. Ms. BIRD (Australia) said that UNRWA had continued to provide assistance in its traditional areas of health, education and social welfare, as well as stepping up its emergency programmes, despite the obstacles it was encountering in the discharge of its tasks. In particular its privileges and immunities were being increasingly disregarded. Those rights and privileges were essential to the Agency's performance and, moreover, were enshrined in international law. Israel must respect UNRWA operations in the occupied territories. The continued detention of UNRWA staff members was unacceptable.

40. The efficient functioning of the Agency was vital to long-term stability in the region. Her delegation was concerned over the financial difficulties faced by UNRWA, which might force it to curtail its operations. Given UNRWA's record of achievement in difficult circumstances, Australia hoped that more countries would provide financial support. Her Government, for its part, would continue its support of the Agency until the parties to the disputes in the region devised a durable political solution.

41. Mr. TARI (Israel) said that the problem of Palestine refugees would not have existed had it not have been for the aggressive war launched by Arab leaders against Israel 40 years earlier. The leaders of the Arab States and of the PLO had subsequently blocked any attempts to resolve the problem. The suffering of the refugees, who had been reduced to mere political tools, had been cynically nourished in order to breed hatred and violence.

42. While his delegation commended UNRWA for its efforts during a period of stress, it took exception to the general tenor of the report of the Commissioner-General (A/45/13), which was biased against Israel, as typified by the reference in paragraph 11 to the killing of alleged collaborators without making it clear that the Israelis bore no responsibility. In fact over 300 Palestinians, including some UNRWA staff members, had been assassinated by the PLO and other terrorist groups as alleged collaborators. Similarly, the report dwelt on the purported denial by Israel of UNRWA privileges and immunities, while mentioning only briefly (A/45/13, para. 110) its inability to visit staff in detention in Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. The statistics on casualties cited in the report belied the fact that no one was more concerned with human rights than Israel.

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(Mr. Tari, Israel)

43. His Government had continued to co-operate with UNRWA on the basis of the agreement it had reached with the Agency in 1967. The fact that UNRWA employed some 8,000 local workers meant that it was the major non-government employer in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. There had thus inevitably been instances of friction with the Israeli security forces owing to the conditions prevailing since 1987. Unfortunately, too, numerous individuals among the UNRWA functionaries had participated in subversive activities, utilizing Agency facilities for those purposes. UNRWA could clearly not claim immunity in respect of its installations while allowing them to serve as a refuge for violence. It should be noted, in that connection, that UNRWA's monitoring of Israeli security movements had often served to inflame already tense situations.

44. It was clear that any unilateral effort by UNRWA to broaden its activities beyond its mandate, in contravention of the parameters agreed upon between the Agency and Israel, would not contribute to mutual understanding. Israel had in fact made a considerable effort to reduce friction and to assist UNRWA in discharging its tasks. Such co-operation was subject to the clear understanding that Israel was, under international law, the only responsible authority in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. His Government still believed that the Middle East could move towards peace. One step would be a resolution of the refugee problem, in which the Committee had the ability to play a role.

45. Mr. ARCILLA (Philippines) said that his delegation was disturbed by the steady deterioration in the conditions under which UNRWA operated and by the continued violation of the human rights of the Palestine refugees. Repressive measures by Israel in dealing with the intifadah could only sow more hatred.

46. Israel's increasing disregard for the privileges and immunities of UNRWA was particularly disquieting. On hundreds of occasions Israeli forces had entered Agency premises without authority, acts which were surely not consistent with international law. The Israeli authorities were also seeking to curtail UNRWA's capacity to discharge its functions by imposing bureaucratic measures and limiting the freedom of movement of Agency personnel. In addition educational facilities had been closed down. The Israeli authorities should refrain from any act which interfered with the Agency's mandate.

47. His delegation noted the Agency's funding difficulties, particularly with regard to emergency programmes, which were vital to the well-being of the refugee population. Increased contributions were needed.

48. The world was experiencing phenomenal political changes, with concomitant opportunities to bring peace to troubled areas. Peace could be given a chance in the Middle East, the most explosive region in the world, if the question of Palestine was resolved, beginning with the convening of an International Peace Conference under United Nations auspices. His Government unequivocally supported the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and the right of all States in the area to exist within recognized boundaries.

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49. Mr. HANNAN (Bangladesh) said that his delegation noted with concern the difficult circumstances under which UNRWA was operating. The report of the Commissioner-General was a lurid chronicle of the atrocities committed by the Israeli authorities against Palestine refugees. Palestine was suffering unmitigated anguish and harsh repression, and men, women and children were wantonly killed. A whole community was being strangled.

50. While the Palestine refugees welcomed relief in their distress, they wanted above all to see their sufferings ended once and for all. A permanent solution on the basis of the full realization of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination must be found. There was an urgent need to convene the proposed International Peace Conference on the Middle East, under United Nations auspices.

51. Mr. AL ZAYANI (Bahrain) said that the Palestine refugee problem was a fundamental part of the Palestine issue, the core of which was its political aspect. Israel's persistent refusal over the past four decades to recognize the inalienable right of the Palestine refugees to return had made it necessary for UNRWA to become a vital institution providing them with basic services, short-term relief and long-term programmes aimed at improving their economic and social situation, without prejudice to their right to return to their homes in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

52. Since its establishment, UNRWA had become the major agency for the provision of assistance to Palestine refugees. The true character of Israeli intentions towards the Agency and towards any possible solution to the Palestine issue was clear from the qualitative change that had taken place in the techniques of repression used and in the new restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities. It was Israel's aim to destroy the infrastructure of the Agency as a means of preventing the Palestinian people from exercising its right to self-determination. UNRWA had nevertheless endeavoured to strengthen its regular programmes by introducing new methods and new activities more in keeping with the increasing needs. It had adopted complex administrative measures in order to ensure the speedy and effective delivery of services without detriment to the management of its operations.

53. The Israeli occupation authorities had made use of the temporary detention of young people as a form of economic pressure since parents had to pay in order to secure their release. Owing to selective closure orders by the authorities, school life had been severely disrupted. The increased toll of lives and the physical repression had led to greater tragedies, and there had been a constant decline in the income of families owing to the slow-down and occasional paralysis of economic life and the detention or unemployment of breadwinners.

54. The report of the Commissioner-General showed that the privileges and immunities of UNRWA had been increasingly disregarded. Israeli troops had occupied Agency facilities for long periods of time, ambulances carrying injured persons for medical attention had been interfered with, and staff members performing their duties had been ill-treated.

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55. His delegation hoped that the Agency would be able to obtain greater financial resources that would enable it to implement the construction programme, in addition to its regular and emergency programmes, in view of the negative impact that its postponement would have on basic services provided to refugees.

56. Mr. AWAWDEH (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel had distorted the facts. It was Israel's refusal to accept the provisions of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which stipulated that refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so or be paid compensation, which had created the problem. There was obvious irony in Israel's attempts to attract new immigrants to the occupied territories while refusing to allow Palestine refugees to return to their homes. The Arab States were not seeking to exploit the question of Palestine; on the contrary, they would be pleased if there was no further need for UNRWA.

57. With reference to Israel's claim that the report of the Commissioner-General had displayed bias in referring to UNRWA staff members detained in the Middle East, the Committee would note that only two Agency staff members had been detained in Jordan, and then only briefly. In contrast, Israel was responsible for hundreds of violations of UNRWA's facilities and for having imprisoned over 50 UNRWA staff members.

58. Mr. KHANI (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the claim by the representative of Israel to be concerned with human rights ignored the massacres which had been perpetrated in the past and which continued today. Israel was intensifying its attempts to suppress the intifadah. The international community had condemned Israel's intransigence, the latest example of which could be seen in its reaction to the Secretary-General's attempt to send a mission to investigate the recent killings in Jerusalem. Israel had never complied with United Nations resolutions or accepted the applicability of the fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories. It was clear that the Government of Israel sought to establish a "Greater Israel". The international community must oblige Israel to comply with United Nations resolutions and recognize the rights of the Palestinian people.

59. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, as in previous years, the representative of Israel had presented a view of the situation that differed from the views of all the other speakers and those contained in the Commissioner-General's report and all the Secretary-General's reports on the subject. The Israeli Government had ignored international opinion, not only on the issue of Palestine refugees, but also on the general situation in the region and on a just solution to the Palestinian question. Although the statements made over the years by the representatives of Israel were valid in that they were truthful presentations of the Israeli Government's understanding of the origins of the Palestinian problem, the argument over those origins should be put aside so that the Committee could consider the draft resolution before it (A/SPC/45/L.5). That draft resolution was introduced annually by the representative of the United States, and no State, not even Israel,

(Mr. Mansour, Observer, Palestine)

had ever voted against it. He saw no reason why Israel could not comply with the draft resolution's call to implement paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which stated that Palestine refugees wishing to return to their homes should be permitted to do so, and that those choosing not to return should be compensated for the loss of their property.

60. The representative of Israel had indicated that according to international law, Israel had been entrusted with the maintenance of law and order in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. However, that position was inconsistent with Israel's refusal to acknowledge that it was an occupying Power in those territories, and was therefore an instance of Israel's hypocrisy in selectively applying the principles of international law. One example of Israel's obstruction of international law was its refusal to comply with Security Council resolution 672 (1990), which called for Israel to allow a fact-finding mission to investigate the massacre of 8 October 1990 in Jerusalem. In its reply to the Secretary-General, Israel had claimed that Jerusalem was not an occupied territory, but the capital of the State of Israel. That position was in violation of both international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

61. He recalled that Israel was the only State Member of the United Nations that had been admitted to the Organization on the condition that it would comply with General Assembly resolutions on the establishment of a Palestinian State and on the return or compensation of Palestine refugees. However, Israel still refused to observe those conditions. In addition, in a 1988 report to the Security Council (S/19443), the Secretary-General had said that the international community should attempt to persuade Israel to accept the applicability to the occupied territories of the fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

62. The statement by the representative of Israel that the Palestine refugees were being used by the Arab countries as tools for furthering political aims was a racist insinuation; of all countries, Israel was the least qualified to speak on behalf of the Arab States. The real attitude of the Palestinians was best expressed in paragraph 19 of the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council (S/21919), which indicated that they lived in constant fear, particularly because they had no recourse to any authority other than the Israeli security forces, who were often responsible for the measures inflicted upon them. In addition, paragraph 20 of that report mentioned the Palestinians' deep distrust of the Israeli occupation authorities and their wish to be protected by an impartial presence mandated by the United Nations.

63. Mr. TARI (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right to reply, said that, in the current atmosphere of political détente and freedom, history could no longer be rewritten, and that nothing could change the fact that the refugee problem had begun when Arab armies had invaded Israel in order to end its existence. In addition, the fact could not be ignored that Palestine refugees were the only refugee group in the world that had not only persisted, but even increased, over the course of decades. All of the possible solutions set forth by the United

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(Mr. Tari, Israel)

Nations and other organizations had been blocked and sabotaged by the Arab States, in order to maintain the refugee situation as a political instrument against Israel. Many Palestinians were in favour of a dialogue with Israel, but had been assassinated or terrorized by the Palestine Liberation Organization. Moreover, the Syrian Arab Republic was in no position to express indignation against Israel, because of its own record of human rights violations. However, in spite of all obstacles, Israel would continue to seek peace through dialogue. He hoped that the Middle East would join the rest of the world in entering a new era of détente.

64. Mr. KHANI (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that zionism was inherently racist. The position that all Jews throughout the world had the right to emigrate to Israel had resulted in the displacement of Arabs and was evidence of Israel's attempt to impose zionism on all Jews and to separate Jews from other societies.

65. Mr. TARI (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that zionism was the liberation movement of the Jewish people, and that it represented their aspirations to freedom and self-determination. Israel was ready to co-operate with the international community, particularly with the Arab States, in the search for a peaceful solution to the conflict.

66. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that although Israel had deplored the failure of the many attempts to establish peace in the region, Israel was responsible for those failures because of its disregard of United Nations resolutions. In addition, the statistics cited in the Commissioner-General's report (A/45/13) on the number of Palestinians killed or injured by Israeli authorities demonstrated that it was Israel, and not the PLO, which was terrorizing the Palestine refugees.

67. However, the role of the United Nations was not to argue over the past, but to find immediate and lasting solutions to current problems. The previous year's General Assembly resolution (44/42) calling for the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East represented a concrete step towards finding a solution. The United Nations and the Arab States had been ready for many years to hold such a conference; he hoped that Israel would finally agree to participate.

68. Mr. GIACOMELLI (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that the Committee's debate had provided him with a valuable opportunity to verify the Agency's orientation and priorities. The views and suggestions of the various delegations would be carefully considered.

69. It was understandable that there could be some divergence of views between the occupying authority, which was responsible for the maintenance of law and order, and an international agency that was trying to alleviate the plight of thousands of refugees. However, the Agency was not trying to expand the parameters of its mandate, but was only trying to respond flexibly to the current dramatic needs of the refugees. He took exception to the allegation that UNRWA staff had taken part

(Mr. Giacomelli)

in acts of violence and expressed his confidence in their loyalty and integrity in abiding by the values and obligations of the Agency. However, he was prepared to examine any alleged deviations from such standards that might be formally brought to his attention.

70. In response to the claim by the representative of Israel that the report on UNRWA activities was biased, he said that he was sure the Committee would appreciate the difficulty of preparing such a report in a manner that would appear unbiased to all. For that reason, a draft of the report was informally shared with Israeli authorities every year. He emphasized that the Agency acted in accordance with purely humanitarian goals.

71. He was heartened by the Committee's support of the Agency's work but stressed that the Agency's emergency relief and assistance programmes could be paralysed in a matter of weeks unless additional financial resources were received. He hoped that the upcoming pledging conference would provide a solid basis for the Agency's 1990-1991 budget requirements.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-FIFTH SESSION
Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
8th meeting
held on
Monday, 5 November 1990
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ARCILLA (Philippines)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 74: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/SPC/45/L.5, L.6 and L.7)

1. The CHAIRMAN noted that, in addition to the draft resolution already circulated in document A/SPC/45/L.5, the Committee had before it two other draft resolutions relating to item 74 (A/SPC/45/L.6 and A/SPC/45/L.7).

AGENDA ITEM 77: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (A/45/21 and A/45/533)

2. Mrs. SEVIGNY (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information) said that the changes in the global political environment and the end of the cold war had given new impetus to the role, credibility and relevance of the United Nations. The international community was placing renewed hope in the United Nations, which was now perceived as the unique forum for the collective search for solutions to global problems. The need to provide information was imperative and the Department of Public Information (DPI) was being called on to meet a surge in demand for its products and services.

3. The Secretary-General's visit to Amman at the outset of the Gulf crisis had riveted world attention on him and on the United Nations. More than 60 of the largest media outlets had demanded exclusive interviews with him. At New York Headquarters alone, the Department had prepared and distributed summaries of 478 regular and special briefings held over the past 12 months. It had also arranged 103 briefings by delegations and 52 by United Nations officials.

4. In recent months, the Security Council had met at all hours of the day and night, often on weekends. DPI staff were always on duty during those times, servicing the press, and arranging for television, radio and photographic coverage. Spokesmen provided by DPI represented the Council, the President of the General Assembly and the many peace missions in the field, such as those in Namibia, Nicaragua and El Salvador. During the recent Security Council meetings on the Gulf crisis, the Department had readjusted its news service in response to the needs of listeners in Europe and had also provided news agencies with the appropriate material.

5. In the months of August and September, DPI had produced some 20 hours of television news packages on the same issue and had produced 32 press releases in English and French totalling more than 200 pages. It had also produced a World Chronicle TV magazine programme featuring the Chairman of the United Nations Security Council Committee established by resolution 661 (1990) concerning the situation between Iraq and Kuwait. There had been a significant increase in requests for documents and audio-visual material as well as telephone inquiries, which showed the increased interest not only of specialists but the general public. That interest was also demonstrated by the fact that 2,000 journalists had been accredited for coverage of the General Assembly's general debate and more than 3,500 media representatives from 100 countries had been accredited to cover the World Summit for Children.

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(Mrs. Sevigny)

6. During the past year, the Department had continued to assess public opinion. Poll results from 23 developed and developing countries had been released and results from three more countries would be released soon. The polls assessed awareness and knowledge of the United Nations. More than half of the countries surveyed registered awareness levels of 90 per cent or above and two thirds of those polled assessed the Organization's performance as good. The polls, however, showed a declining awareness of the United Nations system as a whole. In November 1989, 22 senior journalists from Latin America the Caribbean and Europe, representing 22 countries, had been invited to Headquarters for a three-day programme of briefings. Fifteen journalists from as many African countries had also been taken to Namibia to cover first-hand the historic elections there. An Asian Round Table at Headquarters would be held shortly.

7. One of DPI's major concerns continued to be the development of information programmes for peace and security. DPI's major publication on peace-keeping, the Blue Helmets, had recently been redesigned and expanded to cover the five new peace-keeping operations undertaken by the Organization since 1988. A variety of background material on United Nations peace activities in Cambodia and Central America, and an educational video and teacher's guide for use in high schools, were also being prepared. In March 1991, DPI planned to hold a round table in Singapore, under the auspices of the Governments of Singapore and Japan, on peace-making and peace-keeping operations, in anticipation of the important role the United Nations might be called on to play in the Cambodia peace process.

8. Building on its experience on Namibia, the Department had developed general standards for the information component of peace-keeping activities which would shortly be applied in connection with the Western Sahara mission. At present guidelines were being prepared for all public information activities in that area and for the promotion and strengthening of coverage of major United Nations conferences.

9. On the day that Namibia had taken its seat in the General Assembly, the Department had inaugurated a photo exhibit at Headquarters on the land and its people, published a booklet entitled Namibia Outlook, and organized a tour of Namibia for senior and influential correspondents from newspapers in potential donor countries. Many of the same correspondents had recently participated in a series of one-day seminars on Namibia's future held in Frankfurt, Bonn, Helsinki and Gottenburg. A compilation of the articles they had published had been issued in a booklet entitled Namibia in the News. Negotiations were also in progress with the Government of Namibia for the establishment of an information centre at Windhoek early in 1991.

10. The Department attached great significance to information on the work of the United Nations with regard to decolonization, particularly in the framework of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Now that Namibia had become independent, the Department intended to change the name of the Anti-apartheid, Namibia and Palestine Programmes Section to the Anti-apartheid, Decolonization and Palestine Programmes Section. In connection with its campaign

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(Mrs. Sevigny)

against apartheid, DPI continued its close collaboration with the Centre Against Apartheid. That covered a wide range of activities which included the preparation for and the multi-media coverage and promotion of the General Assembly's special session on apartheid and the visit to United Nations Headquarters on 22 June 1990 of the African National Congress leader, Mr. Nelson Mandela. The Department had mounted a major travelling photo exhibit on apartheid which had been shown in New York, London, Madrid and Frankfurt. It also continued to produce and distribute anti-apartheid radio programmes.

11. On the question of Palestine, the Department had vigorously continued its special programme, which included publications such as an educational video with an accompanying teaching guide for high schools, a news mission for senior journalists to the Middle East and 12 regional and national journalists encounters in Europe, Asia and Latin America.

12. The Department was continuing its work in connection with the economic crisis in Africa and the efforts to overcome it. Its quarterly newsletter Africa Recovery went to 30,000 readers. It published briefing papers on the African least developed countries and had publicized the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development. In co-operation with UNDP, it had organized a tour by Western and African journalists to two African countries prior to the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

13. The Department had worked closely with UNCTAD in designing an information strategy for the Paris Conference on the Least Developed Countries. The press kit it had prepared in connection with the Secretary-General's report on the debt crisis had been in such demand that it was later reprinted as a pamphlet entitled Debt: A Crisis For Development. It had also produced a totally revised version of an earlier booklet on global economic issues entitled The World Economy: A Global Challenge.

14. Following the consensus achieved in 1990 in the Committee on Information, DPI and UNESCO had decided to plan and finance jointly a seminar, to be held in Namibia in 1991, on possible ways of developing an independent and pluralistic press in Africa. The year 1989 had seen several notable events in the United Nations, and in each of those events DPI had co-operated with the services and departments concerned. In September, the Department had played a major role in assisting UNICEF in arranging and publicizing the World Summit for Children. Prior to the Summit, DPI had held its annual conference for non-governmental organizations. Attended by 1,100 participants from 60 countries, the conference had been the best-attended function for non-governmental organizations in United Nations history.

15. The Department had actively participated in the preparations for the awards ceremony in which the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had honoured four current or former women heads of State or Government. It had also produced news features, booklets, posters and press kits on development, as well as a video on women and illiteracy.

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(Mrs. Sevigny)

16. DPI had been given the primary responsibility for co-ordinating activities for the World Public Information Campaign on Human Rights. In that regard, the Department continued to use all its available facilities, including radio, television, films, publications and periodicals, to promote public awareness of human rights and the United Nations role in that field. The Department had undertaken 20 reprints and new productions of human rights publications and was currently producing a documentary film on human rights.

17. DPI programmes could be heard on radio stations throughout the world; produced in New York, they comprised news and current-affairs magazines. The Department also provided weekly news-magazine programmes in 22 languages to national and other radio organizations world wide for broadcast over their own transmitter facilities.

18. Difficulties were being encountered with financing certain publications, in particular Development Forum, the sole inter-agency publication on development issues in the whole United Nations system, which had relied on voluntary contributions and was currently in danger of folding.

19. Every effort was being made by the 67 information centres and services to intensify direct and systematic exchanges of information with non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and local media. Recognizing the need for closer ties between the information centres and DPI at Headquarters in New York, a meeting of centre directors in Arab countries had been held in March 1990 to review the role and function of those centres and to enhance their co-operation with other United Nations offices in the promotion of and understanding for the Organization's role in tackling the issues and problems of concern to that region. In May 1990, a meeting had been held of centre directors serving in Asia and the Pacific, which had coincided with the launching in Manila of a publicity campaign to promote public awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The information centres in the region had co-operated with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, and the event had been broadcast by satellite throughout the region.

20. The information centres were facing the task of reaching a proper balance within available resources for their threefold functions: official representation of the United Nations; the promotion of United Nations information and coverage of its activities; and collaboration with other United Nations agencies and programmes, in particular on social and economic development issues. In that regard, DPI had succeeded to a great extent in maintaining closer and smoother relations with other United Nations agencies, particularly the United Nations Development Programme.

21. Several Member States had expressed the wish to have information centres opened in their capitals, which would be possible if the request was approved by the General Assembly together with the necessary financial resources. In that connection, it was important to reiterate the need for ensuring the availability of operational funds for information centres. Several Governments did contribute to the financing of information centres in their capitals. Countries must meet their commitments; those that did not contribute must seriously consider doing so.

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(Mrs. Sevigny)

22. In the highly competitive information market, the efficient and prompt dissemination of DPI materials was an absolute necessity for publicizing the Organization's activities. That was usually done in six languages. The Department had had to rely increasingly on expensive courier service for such work. Drawing on diverse means of dissemination, DPI had stepped up its promotional activities for the United Nations guided tours, had increased its involvement of New York and had recently produced an announcement on the United Nations that had been aired on the local channels 5, 11 and TBS.

23. The Department had expanded its use of computers and other technological innovations to improve its information products, means of distribution and ties with information centres. It had also upgraded its computer infrastructure to ensure that staff had access to a network linking them with each other and with the mainframe computers. DPI currently had one computer for every two people, and 56 information centres and services had facsimile machines installed and fully operational (A/45/533, para. 94), 22 of which were connected to Headquarters through an electronic mail system.

24. Although the Department had undergone a 15 per cent cut in its staffing in the past five years, it had tripled its publications production and increased its radio and television output by 20 per cent. But it had reached a ceiling, and it could not accomplish any more with existing financial resources, let alone face future demands. It needed more flexibility both in reaching out for the support of outside groups ready to lend their co-operation in conformity with the principles of the Charter and in budget management.

25. It was important for the international community to realize that, without an effective communication programme, it was impossible to sustain strong public support for multilateralism. Furthermore, improving the media was an essential and integral component of progress, and there could be no development without it. In order to reach the public, DPI needed the co-operation of all the information media, not only to stimulate interest in multilateralism, but also to promote development itself. It was essential to foster a better understanding of the United Nations and its role, in particular among younger generations.

26. Mr. FASEHUN (Chairman of the Committee on Information) introduced the report of the Committee on Information (A/45/21). Referring to the twelfth session of the Committee, held at Headquarters from 5 April to 2 May 1990, he said that the Committee had initially planned to complete its work on 20 April 1990. The fact that the session had been extended to 2 May was a reflection of the difficulties encountered in the negotiating process and the conviction on the part of delegations that their prolonged efforts would ultimately bear fruit.

27. The positive debate that had taken place on questions relating to a new world information and communication order and the work of the United Nations in the field of information and communication reflected the determination of all delegations to bridge the long-standing differences in approach to those key issues. It had also revealed broad recognition of the fundamental principles and objectives with regard to information and communication activities at national and international levels,

(Mr. Fasehun)

namely, freedom of information and the reduction, through international co-operation, of disparities existing between the information systems and communication infrastructures of the developing and developed world.

28. The debate of the Committee had also emphasized that support for a new world information and communication order had been based not on any opposition to the principle of freedom of information, but on the fact that the imbalance between the media capacities of the developing and developed world was incompatible with that fundamental principle (para. 26). A commitment to those same principles and objectives had been instrumental to the successful outcome of the twenty-fifth General Conference of UNESCO, which had unanimously adopted a new strategy for "Communication in the service of humanity" (para. 19). The breakthrough achieved by the General Conference and the significant progress made by the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session had paved the way to reaching a consensus in the Committee on Information.

29. He introduced draft resolution I, entitled "Information in service of humanity", and draft resolution II, entitled "United Nations public information policies and activities" (A/45/21, Part IV), both of which had been adopted by consensus and had overcome the stalemate which for years had deadlocked the deliberations of the Committee on Information and the Special Political Committee on those key issues.

30. Draft resolution I was a careful amalgamation of the major elements of General Assembly resolution 44/50, on information in the service of mankind, and of resolution 25/C/104 of the General Conference of UNESCO, on communication in the service of humanity. The text underscored the importance of international co-operation to enhance the media capacities of the developing world, as well as the equal importance of respect for freedom of information, for the plurality of sources and for the ownership of the means of communication.

31. Draft resolution II reflected both the plurality and the concurrence of views on the general guidelines for the work of the Department of Public Information and on the specific tasks assigned to the Department. It provided the Department with a set of clear and well-balanced directives to enable it to address key issues of concern to Member States.

32. As indicated in paragraph 75 of the report, both draft resolutions had been adopted by consensus by the Committee on Information, on the understanding that it would be left to the Special Political Committee to agree on the preambular paragraphs that might be added to them.

33. The broad agreement on a new world information and communication order and on freedom of information was a significant milestone which reflected the extraordinary spirit that currently prevailed. It was to be hoped that the Special Political Committee, in the same spirit of co-operation, would endorse the hard-won consensus of the Committee on Information.

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(Mr. Fasehun)

34. Draft decisions I and II attested to the interest and importance which Member States attached to the Committee on Information.

35. Mr. ISAKSSON (Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office with the United Nations) said that few questions before the United Nations had greater importance for the well-being of humanity than that of the free flow of information and the right of all peoples to freedom of expression and communication. In accordance with its Constitution, the first priority of UNESCO was to promote the free flow of information and to advance the communication and information capacities of member States, especially in developing countries.

36. He noted with satisfaction that previous controversies in that area had been put to rest and that in April 1990 the Committee on Information had achieved a consensus on the draft resolution currently before the Special Political Committee. His delegation took pride in having paved the way for the consensus reached in New York. At its twenty-fifth General Conference, held the previous year, UNESCO had approved its new strategy for the development of communications as part of its 1990-1995 medium-term plan. The UNESCO programme, "Communication in the service of humanity", consisted of three basic elements: encouraging the free flow of information at the national and international levels; promoting wider and better-balanced dissemination of information, without any obstacle to freedom of expression, and using all appropriate means to develop the communication capacities of developing countries in order to increase their participation in the communication process, including the reinforcement of the International Programme for the Development of Communication; and advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples through mass communication.

37. The new strategy unequivocally supported freedom of the press and called upon UNESCO to strive for the development of free, independent and pluralistic media in both the public and private sectors; to facilitate and guarantee, along with its member States, the freedom of journalists to report; and to ensure that public, private and other media in developing countries were provided with the conditions and resources necessary to increase their strength and consolidate their independence.

38. The new communications programme had already yielded results. For example, in February 1990, a meeting at UNESCO headquarters had brought together journalists, editors and news executives from emerging independent publications in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union with their counterparts from Western Europe, the United States and Canada. That meeting, organized in response to requests from several leading media organizations, had produced a number of concrete results, such as the establishment or strengthening of bilateral contacts between news organizations in East and West, the announcement of new training and internship programmes and the initiation of efforts to help the emerging news media in Eastern Europe to function in free market systems.

39. In order to facilitate that aid and to guarantee its continuation, UNESCO was studying ways in which it could serve as a co-ordination centre in order to maximize co-operation. Since that objective would probably involve the

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(Mr. Isaksson)

establishment of a central data base that could be accessed over international telecommunications networks, UNESCO had initiated talks with a number of news media research organizations to investigate that possibility.

40. Perhaps the most important result of the February 1990 meeting had been the creation, in Warsaw, of a centre for communication for Eastern and Central Europe, which would serve as a training, research, library and computer facility. The centre had been proposed by the Polish Journalists' Association, and the Director-General of UNESCO had immediately provided the first $20,000 to initiate the centre's operations. The International Federation of Journalists had contributed another $10,000, and other contributors included the World Press Freedom Committee and the United States Department of State.

41. UNESCO was also preparing for an African press seminar, to be held in Windhoek, Namibia in early 1991. The sum of $50,000 had already been pledged to cover the costs of the seminar, at which 60 to 80 African journalists, editors and publishers would hold discussions with their counterparts from the North on ways to strengthen their media organizations. Another meeting, to be held in January 1991 at UNESCO headquarters, would focus specifically on the needs of media in French-speaking Africa.

42. The new strategy for communications had also produced changes in the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), which, for the first time, would allow privately owned media enterprises in developing countries to apply to it directly for assistance. At its eleventh meeting, IPDC had approved the financing of 31 communications projects in developing countries at a total cost of $1.8 million. At its twelfth meeting, the Intergovernmental Council of IPDC would consider 49 communications projects, including 2 interregional, 13 regional and 34 national projects. Since its establishment in 1982, IPDC had assisted more than 370 communications projects in developing countries, at a total cost of nearly $28 million. Since that figure was far from sufficient and the number of projects submitted was much greater than the number that could be approved, he reiterated the appeal by the Director-General of UNESCO and by the Chairman of IPDC for greater contributions to IPDC from those nations that were able to provide them.

43. Mr. TRAXLER (Italy), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Community, observed that freedom, including freedom of opinion, was currently in ascendancy throughout the world. He recalled that article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had proclaimed that freedom of opinion was a right, and that in 1946 the General Assembly had stated that it was "the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated" (resolution 59 (I)). Freedom of information was a basic right that formed the foundation of any democratic society. Its exercise must therefore be free of any limitation. Considering that fact and convinced that only the free activity of journalists and the free flow of information could substantiate that basic right, his delegation felt compelled to condemn violations of freedom of the press wherever they occurred. In particular, it was gravely concerned about the increase in the number of journalists who had lost their lives in performing their duties over the previous few years.

(Mr. Traxler, Italy)

44. He expressed full satisfaction at the consensus reached at the last meeting of the Committee on Information, which represented a major step forward in the spirit of the resolution adopted by UNESCO in 1989 on communication in the service of humanity, and said that his delegation would spare no effort to maintain and expand the basis of that consensus.

45. The Community was well aware of the existing disparities in the capacity of the developed and developing countries to disseminate information and to communicate their views and was ready to assist the developing countries in formulating their own information and communications policies and to increase their participation in the communication process, and that included strengthening their infrastructure and technology. The Community welcomed the UNESCO Executive Board's recent decision to include in the priority programme areas for 1992 and 1993 the free flow and wider and better balanced dissemination of information at the international and national levels as well as its decision to strengthen the communication capacities of the developing countries and the International Programme for the Development of Communication. The Community attached great importance to the work of the Department of Public Information and would do everything possible to assist the Department in discharging its duties. He reaffirmed the Community's support for the work done by the Secretary-General in making the Department a more effective instrument in disseminating information about the United Nations, and congratulated the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information for the work done during the past year. Lastly, the Community was convinced that the time had come for the General Assembly to reaffirm the consensus reached in the Committee on Information and would do its utmost to contribute to a better understanding of the role of information in an interdependent world and of the need to give the Department a clearer mandate and to promote its efficiency.

46. Mr. RAFIRASME (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the free flow of accurate and objective information was a fundamental element of international relations and national development. However, on account of the considerable imbalances between developed and developing countries in the field of information and communication, the countries which retained the monopoly of technology were able to promote their viewpoints unilaterally. As denounced in the final declaration of the Third Conference of the Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Havana in September 1990, the current system facilitated the use of the communications media by a few countries to undermine the moral and religious values and the cultural identity of the other countries. For example, it was enough to note that, whereas four Western press agencies disseminated 32 million words per day, the 90 agencies of the non-aligned countries disseminated only 80,000 words.

47. In the same way that the developing countries had had to fight for their economic and political freedom, they now had to strive to obtain the necessary technical infrastructure to gain freedom of information. Consequently, their efforts at regional and interregional co-operation should be continued and intensified, and they should progress from mere declarations to the adoption of real, concrete and practical measures. The new world information and communication order was inspired by respect for the sovereignty of States and the traditions of peoples; it was based not on a presumed opposition to the principle of the free

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(Mr. Rafirasme, Islamic Republic of Iran)

flow of information but on the fact that the prevailing situation was incompatible with that fundamental principle.

48. His delegation, aware of the need to promote development of the present system, was prepared to contribute to placing the vast information potential at the service of peace and mutual understanding. In that context, his delegation was pleased to note the consensus reached at the twelfth session of the Committee on Information. Furthermore, Iran's adherence to the principle of freedom of expression was reflected in the major efforts that Iran had made in that direction since the triumph of the Islamic revolution. In that connection, he pointed out that, while in 1987 the country had had 150 newspapers, today, there were 253; that efforts to improve the technical infrastructure of the mass media were proceeding satisfactorily; and that by 1993 the five-year plan for the eradication of illiteracy, begun in 1989, would reduce the illiteracy rate of persons between the ages of 6 and 35 to 0.6 per cent.

49. In the light of the recent strengthening of the authority of the Organization, the Department of Public Information should expand its efforts to promote the activities and objectives of the United Nations system, especially in the developing countries. His delegation felt, in particular, that greater attention should be given to matters of world importance, such as Palestine, apartheid, zionism, the promotion of the role of women and the fight against drug abuse; that more co-operation measures such as those described in document A/45/533 should be adopted; and greater attention given to the question of equitable geographical distribution of staff within the Department. Lastly, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to strengthen United Nations information centres and highlighted the urgent need to reactivate the Tehran Centre.

50. Ms. OUEDRAOGO (Burkina Faso) said that as a result of the recent changes in the world, including the rapprochement between the two great Powers, at its last session, the Committee on Information had finally been able to adopt a resolution on the Organization's policy and work with regard to information and also the long-awaited resolution on information in the service of mankind. Although the latter resolution was not satisfactory, it represented the first fruits of many years of negotiations and she hoped that it would be improved in the future.

51. Her delegation thought that the establishment of a new world information and communication order, based on freedom of the press and expression and disseminating full and varied information free from any manipulation and designed to impart knowledge and promote understanding, was necessary for the development of peoples. Unfortunately, information was being increasingly distorted according to the medium which disseminated it and depending on whether it dealt with the North or the South. In particular, the information on the South was not usually objective and appeared to be conceived to tarnish its image.

52. Her delegation commended the Department of Public Information for the work it had accomplished - despite the obstacles it had encountered - including its achievements within the framework of its information programme pertaining to the

(Ms. Ouedraogo, Burkina Faso)

independence of Namibia. Her country was aware of the Department's financial problems and wished to encourage it to continue its efforts to surmount them.

53. United Nations information centres were an excellent means of informing the population about the Organization's activities. They should therefore be given the requisite materials to increase their productivity, especially in the developing countries, to enable them to reach the people in the rural areas, who were thirsty for outside information. Tours could be organized, films shown about the United Nations and seminars held for the inhabitants of villages. She proposed that the Department of Public Information together with the Outer Space Affairs Division could publish material on the activities of the Organization concerning the preparations for International Space Year, because the developing countries needed to be informed about space activities. Her country wished to be provided with UNICEF publications as well as information on the applications of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children adopted by the General Assembly.

54. In her opinion, there was a need to promote regional and international co-operation among States as well as among institutions regarding information in order to improve services, increase efficiency and remove the disparities between the different systems. In March, the member countries of the Economic Community of West African States had held their first Conference of Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries, one of whose objectives had been to find a way to establish the flow of information among member States. So far, information on the Community's activities was disseminated through other media whose perspective diverged from the fundamental concern of peoples and the objectives of the Organization. It was planned to set up an information committee within the Economic Community of West African States.

55. Radio broadcasting had been in existence in Burkina Faso for 30 years but the national radio still did not devote enough broadcasting time to the majority of the people, most of whom were peasants. The Burkina Faso Journalists' Association had organized a seminar which had discussed the difficulties that journalists encountered in their work and had drafted a charter on their rights and obligations which reaffirmed the political independence of journalists from the power of the State. The virtual non-existence of the material with which to do their work was the chief difficulty of journalists in Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso's new information code recognized public freedoms in that sphere and the rights and obligations of citizens.

56. She said that her country firmly supported the International Programme for the Development of Communication adopted by UNESCO and reaffirmed that, in order for a new world information and communication order to be established, collaboration among States would have to be strengthened, the strategies of UNESCO implemented and the recommendations of the Committee on Information respected.

57. Lastly, she expressed the hope that the General Assembly would adopt by consensus the draft resolutions submitted by the Committee on Information.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-FIFTH SESSION
Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
9th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 6 November 1990
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KARUKUBIRO-KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda)

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AGENDA ITEM 77: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/45/SR.9
21 November 1990
ENGLISH
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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 77: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/45/21, A/45/533; A/SPC/45/L.8 and L.9)

1. Mr. BAEV (Bulgaria) said that in the past year radical changes had occurred in the world, and humanity had become increasingly aware of the problems confronting it and of the need for joint efforts to resolve them. Confrontation had become a thing of the past, and a spirit of co-operation reigned that had led to real progress on many issues that for years had been on the Organization's agenda. The United Nations was working more efficiently to safeguard international peace and security, and it was to be hoped that a new peaceful and democratic international order was being built. One of the factors that had contributed to the radical changes taking place was the free exchange of information, which in turn was becoming a vital instrument for individual development and co-operation among peoples.

2. The spirit of co-operation had also manifested itself in the consensus reached at the twelfth session of the Committee on Information with regard to the Committee's recommendations to the General Assembly on the question of information. The implementation of those recommendations would broaden the scope of international co-operation in the field of information, help unleash the potential of the United Nations in that sphere and enable a closer link to be established between the free flow of information and the need for better-balanced and improved communication capabilities for the developing countries. That would be conducive to building a just and democratic international information system consistent with the interests of all nations and promoting confidence and general understanding.

3. Respect for national cultural achievements and traditions together with universal human values was the guarantee of true freedom of information, which stemmed from the understanding that world culture did not distinguish between small and large nations.

4. Bulgaria was undergoing a period of profound transformations and was experiencing a difficult and radical transition to a democratic and pluralistic society based on parliamentary democracy and a market economy. That transition could only succeed if human rights and fundamental freedoms were strictly respected. In that context, the right to information and to its dissemination were fundamental for strengthening the democratic foundations of society and combating totalitarianism. In recent months, Bulgaria had witnessed a real information boom. New publications had appeared, all restrictions on the broadcasting media had been removed, and State control of radio and television had been lifted. A special parliamentary commission had been established to monitor work in that area. It was to be hoped that the National Assembly would adopt legislation guaranteeing freedom of information in line with international requirements and criteria and that the Parliament would discuss eliminating the State monopoly on the electronic media.

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5. If Bulgaria was to pursue an information policy that was in harmony with the main trends in Europe and the rest of the world in the field of information, it needed greater co-operation on the part of the United Nations, in particular the Department of Public Information (DPI), Bulgaria was especially interested in the opening of a United Nations information centre in Sofia. Direct access for all sectors of Bulgaria's society to the information provided by the United Nations would contribute significantly to the process of democratization in the country. The participation of Bulgarian specialists in regional projects would permit them to draw upon the Department's experience in systematizing international information relations.

6. His delegation subscribed to the view that at a time when the international prestige of the Organization had grown, it had become even more necessary to increase public awareness of its diverse activities. DPI had made progress in rationalizing its work, for example by introducing new technical means for preparing and disseminating information. His delegation also welcomed the Department's initiative of conducting opinion polls in a number of countries on the popularity of the United Nations. As far as the Department's future work was concerned, Bulgaria recommended that it should redouble its efforts on such issues as the situation in the Middle East, the environment, the foreign debt, problems relating to development, international drug trafficking and other topics, as well as improving co-ordination of the entire work of the United Nations and its bodies. The United Nations had an enormous potential for promoting co-operation in the sphere of communications, especially since the conditions for achieving broad international understanding in many areas were favourable. UNESCO, whose activities in the communication sphere were commendable, could also make a contribution in that regard.

7. It was to be hoped that the resolution on questions relating to information, to be adopted at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, would mark the beginning of a new stage in the development of world communications, free of irreconcilable differences and imbalances in the distribution of the means of communications and the flow of information. Bulgaria was ready to work actively to achieve that noble goal.

8. Mr. KHANI (Syrian Arab Republic) recalled that one of the objectives of the new international information and communication order was to create a climate of understanding between peoples and to strengthen international peace and security. That new order must be based on the principles of the Charter and must respect the cultural and social values of all States in order to protect the differences existing between the developed and the developing countries, strengthen international peace and security and promote respect for human rights and understanding and friendship among nations. The report of the Committee on Information (A/45/21) and the reports submitted by the Secretary-General should be seen in that light.

9. DPI played an important role in publicizing topics under United Nations consideration, such as the principle of self-determination, decolonization, the

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(Mr. Khani, Syrian Arab Republic)

cause of the Palestine people, the intifadah in the occupied Arab territories and the inhuman practices of the Israeli authorities. The broadcasting media must objectively reflect the just causes of peoples and thus win their confidence. It was also essential to promote co-operation between the Department and UNESCO and to continue enhancing technical assistance and the creation of communication infrastructures in developing countries.

10. Another important aspect was the Department's co-operation with regional organizations, including the League of Arab States, and with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries on a better dissemination of information on the non-aligned countries. Support must also be given to the Middle East section of the Regional Programmes Unit to provide it with the necessary resources and experienced staff. Press missions must continue to be sent to the occupied territories so that they could see how the provisions of the United Nations resolutions and all international instruments were being violated. In that connection, his delegation stressed the importance of the press communiqués on DPI activities drafted in the working languages of the United Nations and the co-operation with the broadcasting media of the third world.

11. His delegation welcomed the consensus reached at the twelfth session of the Committee on Information and supported General Assembly resolution 44/50 on questions relating to information. The Department's activities must be strengthened, and DPI must be given the technical and financial means to carry out its mandate of promoting international understanding and peace and combating apartheid and racism and to reflect the just struggle of the Palestinian people and the Arab peoples in the occupied territories.

12. Another important aspect was the equitable geographic distribution in DPI, because guaranteeing the representation of the various regions would reflect more authentically the aspirations of each country. It was essential to support the work of the information centres, particularly in the third world countries, because the United Nations could only obtain better assistance by publicizing its activities. His delegation underscored the importance of the United Nations resolutions and decisions compiled in press release GA/7977, issued in English and French, and asked that it should also appear in Arabic.

13. Mr. POSSO SERRANO (Ecuador) said that his delegation attached great importance to the Committee's work in the area under consideration for various reasons, from the essential role of social communication in matters relating to international peace and security to the necessity of promoting the overall development of peoples.

14. Ecuador enjoyed the benefits of a socially responsible political system that respected individual freedoms and guarantees and placed no internal limitations on the exercise of genuine freedom of expression. However, at the international level, Ecuador, like other developing countries, had a lesser technological capacity for communication and fewer resources than the developed countries. He also noted an unjustifiable dependence on certain patterns that violated the values and the character of the people. The developing countries were powerless to

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(Mr. Posso Serrano, Ecuador)

counteract foreign inroads because of the tremendous imbalance in technical capacity and resources.

15. The contributions of the United Nations and of its specialized agencies were essential, although they were not the only means of changing information patterns that emphasized negative aspects of the human community and ignored its achievements.

16. There was some truth in the suggestion that since the communication media in capitalist countries had to sell their final products, those products were tailored to the desires of their probable buyers. That observation had led to the idea that "positive news" was not commercial, whereas "negative news" aroused a morbid interest. Ideas of that type had probably led many segments of the information media in developed countries to publish only negative reports on the developing world, exaggerating its miseries in the possible belief that their readers would thereby forget their own problems. Such practices were deplorable and should be changed through re-education and reorientation campaigns so that information would be truly in the service of humanity. The work of education was the responsibility of all Governments, of the international community and of the United Nations, and it was therefore important to question whether the necessary importance had been accorded to that aspect in the Department's work programmes. If so, it should be given total support as a means of assisting the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

17. His delegation attached great importance to the historic consensus reached by the Committee on Information, since the great sacrifices and concessions of the different sides of the controversy had resulted in a real opportunity for the advancement of communication in all directions.

18. The Secretary-General's report (A/45/533) indicated the concern for continued improvement in the implementation of the Organization's recommendations, in the light of the rapid changes taking place in world politics and of the renewal of the average citizen's interest in the activities of the United Nations. At the same time, it was necessary to awaken interest in the Organization's lesser-known activities that required permanent solidarity to successfully handle more or less chronic situations. In that area, it was necessary to strengthen the work of United Nations information centres by giving them more human and material resources. In any country where there was no such information centre, the Organization should appoint at least one official in any office of the United Nations system in that country, who was responsible exclusively for information activities.

19. Ms. LUO Xu (China) welcomed the consensus reached at the twelfth session of the Committee on Information regarding the strengthening of international co-operation in the field of information, which was a significant achievement, and hoped that all parties would make efforts to promote the early establishment of a new world information and communication order. She reiterated her delegation's view that the information and communication order inherited from the past was

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(Ms. Luo Xu, China)

neither rational nor just and observed that the serious imbalances in that area betwen developed and developing countries had worsened. The current situation in the field of information was still far from meeting the needs of populations.

20. Her delegation felt that the establishment of a new world information and communication order should help to reduce the disparities between North and South and to promote co-operation among the countries of the South, should facilitate the genuinely free flow of information and should foster respect for the sovereignty, values and traditions of different countries.

21. Her delegation called on countries that possessed advanced means of information and communication to expand their co-operation with developing countries in such areas as financing, technology and equipment, and to provide such assistance on more favourable terms so that the new order could be established without delay and could contribute to the prosperity and development of all countries.

22. Her delegation congratulated the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and her staff for the work they had accomplished and was ready to continue co-operating with the Department of Public Information in its efforts to promote understanding among the peoples of the world. She hoped that the Department would further improve its work and place greater emphasis on the problems of developing countries.

23. Mr. LONGTON (Chile) noted the favourable developments in the debates on the item under consideration and said that there was a virtual consensus that information and communication must operate in the greatest freedom; those concepts were growing stronger every day and were becoming the basic pillars of political freedom and a fundamental individual and collective right.

24. Recognizing that there should be no restrictions on the communication of ideas, his delegation agreed with the opinion expressed in the Committee on Information that the freedom to hold and express opinions was essential to the development of a just, united and democratic society. Moreover, discussions on information and communication must consider the role of the communication media. On that point, his delegation strongly felt that, while it was necessary to ensure the free flow of information and the freedom of the communicators, populations also had the right to be informed in a timely, complete and truthful manner. He proposed that the United Nations should consider the possibility of elaborating an international instrument on that topic.

25. He recognized the praiseworthy efforts of the Committee on Information and hoped that the draft resolution on communication in the service of humanity which that Committee had introduced in the General Assembly would be adopted by consensus, as another manifestation of the desire of the majority of Member States to work together to promote the principles and objectives of the United Nations.

(Mr. Longton, Chile)

26. He expressed his delegation's gratitude to the Department of Public Information for the positive work it had accomplished, in spite of having had to function under increasingly difficult circumstances, and supported the areas of concentration adopted by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information. For example, there was a notable improvement in the materials for dissemination on issues such as international co-operation, the environment and the situation in Africa. However, greater emphasis should be placed on campaigns against illicit drug trafficking.

27. Delegations should lend their support to all activities designed to involve the information media in the work of the United Nations, including the activities of the information centres in intensifying communication exchanges with news media and local institutions and in organizing round-table discussions with the regional press. He felt that such discussions should be held more often, in accordance with the availability of the necessary resources. He also recognized that the budgetary restrictions of the Department of Public Information prevented it from acceding to all the requests of the Member States. However, he hoped that budgetary adjustments in the United Nations would result in greater savings and that more resources could be assigned to the Department.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-FIFTH SESSION
Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
10th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 7 November 1990
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KARUKUBIRO-KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda)

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AGENDA ITEM 77: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

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A/SPC/45/SR.10
23 November 1990
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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 77: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/45/21, A/45/533; A/SPC/45/L.8 and L.9)

1. Mr. YOUSIF (Sudan) said that his delegation supported the basic principles and noble ideas in the draft resolutions before the Committee, but it was also aware that they were based on agreements of a theoretical nature. It was important to know how countries with a limited potential could implement the resolutions, once adopted, in view of current realities in the area of information, which was characterized by great imbalances between countries and an information and communication system that allowed certain agencies and media to violate daily the principle of freedom of information. There was no true freedom of the press; often, such freedom was respected only when it did not conflict with national interests, and it was frequently subject to censorship. The principle of freedom of the press and communication should not be regarded as absolute and must be subject to ethical norms, security and the political stability of peoples. In particular, limitations must be set to ensure that those who worked in communications respected the cultures and principles of other peoples and countries, because otherwise they could pose a threat to international peace and security.

2. The Sudan having adopted its decisions in complete independence, it had been the subject of unjustified campaigns conducted by certain international communication media, which peddled their wares to the highest bidder and were devoted to spreading hate and disseminating information that was either false or promoted unilateral interests. Those campaigns contributed to a loss of confidence in the current international information system.

3. Moreover, the flow of information and news in the world ran in one direction only, which meant, for example, that the choice of news on the third world was based on the political interests of those who controlled the communication media. The truth was indispensable for preserving cultural diversity, and his delegation was confident that the United Nations would play an important role in that respect. Specifically, the Sudan proposed that the Organization should consider the possibility of basing the new world information and communication order on a charter that was being drafted while bearing in mind the opinions of all countries and the principle of respecting their sovereignty, culture and values; the contents of such a charter could draw upon the conclusions of the report prepared by the McBride Commission in 1980.

4. If obstacles to freedom of communication were to be eliminated, disparities existing between the developed and developing countries must be reduced. His delegation expressed its appreciation to the countries of the European Community for their offer to help the developing countries to elaborate their communication policies.

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5. Mr. AL-SOBEI (Qatar) said that the Committee had been examining the item under consideration for 15 years, and the adoption of practical measures could no longer be postponed. His delegation was very interested in the question, because at issue was the establishment of the new world information and communication order referred to in General Assembly resolution 44/50. To achieve that objective, technical resources and know-how were needed, and measures must be adopted, more at international than at local level, in order to ensure, *inter alia*, that the Western communication media allowed the publication and broadcast of information from the communication media of the third world, that the communication media of both the North and the South produced suitable information and that the communication media in general, and those of the North in particular, disseminated more objective and equitable information on the third world as well as on peace and understanding at the international level.

6. The Department of Public Information played a decisive role in promoting the principles and goals of the United Nations. DPI organized international and regional seminars in co-operation with the information media. It had used those activities to enhance the treatment of such questions as national liberation movements, especially that of Palestine, and the crisis of the African countries. If that crisis was to be overcome, not only for the benefit of the African countries themselves, but for the entire international community, it was essential for world public opinion to be alive to its dimensions.

7. Lastly, his delegation stressed the importance of co-operation in the area of information between DPI and UNESCO, which had made commendable efforts to give concrete form to the new world information and communication order, and that between the Department and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries.

8. Mr. JERKIC (Yugoslavia) said that information had become a factor of growing importance in promoting understanding and dialogue. The consensus achieved at the twelfth session of the Committee on Information had given new impetus to co-operation on establishing a world information system whereby it was not permitted to allow certain countries to choose or direct information to their own benefit, and on placing communication at the service of all humanity through a greater dissemination of balanced information.

9. Determined to contribute to attaining that goal, the non-aligned countries and the developing countries had made efforts to join the international information system, as seen in the Declaration adopted at the recent Conference of the Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries and in the activities of the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and of the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries. Needless to say, such efforts required substantial material resources, and the developing countries hoped to receive more assistance and co-operation in that sphere from the international community. In that connection, his delegation referred to the exceptional role played by UNESCO.

10. The adequate dissemination of objective information on world events since the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly had helped to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the contemporary world. His delegation recognized and valued

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(Mr. Jerkic, Yugoslavia)

the efforts made to enhance the activities of the United Nations in the area of information. It was aware that the difficulties DPI must face were forcing it to fulfil a growing number of tasks with less resources, but Yugoslavia was confident that the situation would improve in the future and that the current budgetary constraints would not jeopardize its goals.

11. Mr. JANOWSKI (Poland) welcomed the consensus reached at the twelfth session of the Committee on Information and the spirit of co-operation that reigned in the Organization. It was therefore to be hoped that the Committee would be able to deal successfully with the problems it was facing. His delegation was prepared to help promoting better international understanding.

12. His Government recognized that UNESCO played an indispensable role in information and communication. In Warsaw, an important information and study centre for communications in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe had recently been opened.

13. Freedom of opinion, proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was synonymous with freedom of the communication media and with respect for the right of each person to receive and disseminate information without restrictions. Poland's position on the subject was identical to that of every democratic State. It also acknowledged the necessity to redress existing imbalances in that area between developed and developing countries.

14. Wishing to help strengthen the Organization's capacity to disseminate information, Poland hoped that the United Nations would open an information centre in Warsaw, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 38/82 A, 39/98 A and 40/164 A. The Polish Government would provide a building for the centre's headquarters and would pay for its maintenance and for the recruitment of two local staff members. Therefore, the centre's financial implications for the Organization would be limited to additional expenses only. In fact, the only step that remained to be taken before the centre could begin operations was the General Assembly's confirmation of its earlier decision to open the centre.

15. Mr. HOANG VINH THANH (Viet Nam) said that the world was witnessing unprecedented developments that seemed to indicate the end of the cold war. However, there remained many unresolved problems that could be settled only through the efforts of the entire world community. In that context, the role of information and communication was becoming ever more important in promoting international co-operation and understanding. The current situation did not fulfil the hopes of the world's people that there should be equal and balanced exchanges of information and was widening the information gap between developing and developed countries. Only the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order would lessen that disparity. His delegation welcomed all international and bilateral efforts to assist developing countries in enhancing their media capabilities and appreciated the contributions made by UNESCO through its International Programme for the Development of Communication.

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16. Freedom of information, as one of the most important human rights, must be combined with a sense of responsibility and, in ensuring the free dissemination of information, the sovereignty of States and their social values and cultural traditions must be respected. Since 1945, the Vietnamese Government had attached special importance to the development of the country's mass media, which had contributed to the struggle of the Vietnamese people for independence. The media in Viet Nam played an important role in the current renovation process aimed at broadening democracy in all political, economic and social aspects of the country. In 1990, the State Council of Viet Nam had promulgated a new press law, which had been drafted in accordance with the different opinions and suggestions of people of all social strata, particularly the media workers.

17. His delegation praised the accomplishments of the Department of Public Information and hoped that the recommendations in the draft resolutions adopted by consensus would contribute to the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order.

18. Mr. SATOH (Japan) said that the freer flow of information was both a cause and an effect of the current political changes in the world. The flow of information was a dynamic process that required constant national and international efforts, given its critical importance to the development and welfare of society. His delegation welcomed the consensus that had been reached in the Committee on Information and appreciated the spirit of understanding and conciliation demonstrated by Member States during the negotiations. The Committee should renew its discussions on the ways and means of attaining a free and well-balanced flow of information and on United Nations public information policies and activities, focusing on specific issues and avoiding ideological and conceptual debates.

19. For its part, Japan had extended financial and technical co-operation through both bilateral and multilateral channels. In the area of human resources development, it had invited 2,150 trainees from developing countries to participate in training courses in Japan and had dispatched more than 1,600 Japanese experts to contribute to the development of technology in those countries. As for infrastructural improvement in telecommunications, the Japanese Government had been extending official development assistance to various projects in developing countries, and had committed a total of $416 million to such projects in 1989.

20. His delegation supported the Department of Public Information's new approaches to the rationalization of its work and the revitalization of its structure and appreciated its current efforts to accomplish a growing number of activities within its budgetary and administrative limitations. He hoped that, at its following session, the Committee on Information would focus on how it could best help the Department to discharge its functions.

21. Mr. ARCILLA (Philippines) said that his delegation was pleased to have taken part in arriving at a consensus on questions relating to information, which it considered a practical route towards the establishment of a new, freer and better balanced world information and communication order. The strengthening of information capabilities and structures in the developing countries was the best

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(Mr. Arcilla, Philippines)

strategy for changing an international order characterized by imbalance and disparities in the dissemination of information.

22. His country encouraged the active participation of its people and the information media in the production, processing and dissemination of news. The serious challenges facing the Philippines made it necessary for the lines of information and communication to be kept open and free among the various sectors of society. The country therefore saw a need to work with other States in order to restructure an international system that was dominated by four Western press agencies, from which over 80 per cent of the news flow emanated.

23. The Philippines supported the new information strategy adopted by UNESCO and noted in particular the strategy designed to enhance the communication capacities of developing countries in order to increase their participation in the development process, including the strengthening of the International Programme for the Development of Communication. Training was an indispensable element in that process, because the availability of trained manpower was important.

24. His delegation supported the Department of Public Information in its efforts to intensify global awareness of the true purposes of the Charter with respect to maintaining international peace and security, and was pleased that the Department had tripled its publications and increased its radio and television output by 20 per cent in the previous three years. It was to be hoped that the Department would continue its activities in the priority areas mandated by the General Assembly, particularly the dissemination of information on solving the external debt problems of developing countries, which was an area of special interest to countries such as the Philippines that were severely affected by the current situation in the Gulf.

25. He reiterated the importance of the role of the United Nations information centres in fostering understanding of the Organization's activities among the peoples of the world and pointed out that the Philippines had hosted the meeting of directors of the centres in Asia and the Pacific to review the role of the centres and enhance their co-operation with other United Nations offices.

26. Mr. AKOETE (Togo) said that the changes that had taken place in international relations accentuated the role of the United Nations as an appropriate instrument for channelling the legitimate aspirations of peoples, strengthening multilateralism and promoting co-operation among countries, to their mutual advantage.

27. The intensification of the international political dialogue and the strengthening of international peace and security demanded an ever-broader exchange of information. His Government thought it essential to eliminate the structural imbalances existing in the field of information between the countries of the South and North and to establish a more just and equitable new world information and communication order. It was necessary to make rational use of the communication potential of the Organization, particularly through the Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information.

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(Mr. Akoete, Togo)

28. The consensus achieved in the Committee on Information on the promotion of the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information was historic. Nevertheless, translating the new world order into practice required a reversal of the current trend towards increasing technological disparities in the field of information between the developed and developing countries.

29. His delegation commended DPI for its dissemination of information on the process which had led to independence for Namibia, its campaign on behalf of human rights and against *apartheid*, and its close co-operation with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries. The Department must increase its efficiency still further, not only by intensifying its activities and promoting new projects, but by introducing modern technologies for the collection, processing and transmission of data.

30. With regard to improving the image of the United Nations, it was necessary to mobilize public opinion and continue with opinion polls, while ensuring that they were geographically, politically, culturally and socially representative.

31. Togo was honoured to have been designated as the host for the information centre's meeting to be held in 1991, which would provide it with an opportunity to reiterate its request for the United Nations office at Lomé to be made into an information centre. In May the competent authorities in Togo had carried out a wide-ranging survey among the people, following which they had enacted provisions stipulating that there must be freedom of expression at all levels on a permanent basis, that freedom of expression must be promoted as a means of monitoring the State, and that such freedom must be carefully regulated for it to be exercised in full respect for the law and the dignity of individuals and institutions. The Constitution being formulated reflected a new political attitude and the aspirations of a people which sought to live in justice, in a spirit of tolerance and freedom, and participate in the conduct of State affairs.

32. A reordering of the world was at hand which, based on stability, solidarity, co-operation and respect for the intrinsic dignity of the individual, required that there should be free and fair access to information as a means of promoting understanding among peoples and a solid and lasting entente among States.

33. Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana) said that it was necessary to look to the international environment in which United Nations information activities were conducted to determine the impact of the dramatic developments of recent times and review current programmes in the light of changed and changing circumstances.

34. Notwithstanding the crisis in the Persian Gulf, there existed an almost universal disposition to rely on dialogue and co-operation as means of securing international peace and development. It was heartening that the virtues of interdependence, multilateralism and international co-operation were being increasingly respected by States Members of the United Nations. With the end of the cold war, the international community must appreciate that there existed a unique opportunity to build a more balanced and effective system of inter-State relations.

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(Mr. Insanally, Guyana)

35. His delegation welcomed the fact that UNESCO, at its historic twenty-fifth General Conference, had adopted by consensus a new strategy for "Communication in the service of humanity". He urged DPI to offer its full co-operation to secure a free and more balanced flow of information between States. To do so, it would need to reorder its priorities and pay greater attention to recent concerns, such as drugs and the environment, and possibly redeploy resources from activities which had been terminated.

36. His delegation felt that DPI's activities were excessively oriented towards the developed world. Of the 23 countries in which DPI had conducted opinion polls, only three could be considered developing countries. He suggested that the Governments and peoples of developing countries also needed to be enlisted in support of the Organization. In that connection it should be recalled that the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) had proposed in 1989 that the preparation of information should take into account the different types of audience and targets. Accordingly, DPI must tailor its programmes to suit the particular needs of its final recipients or consumers. That recommendation, which was of fundamental validity in the Caribbean, a region with its own historical, geographical and cultural distinctiveness, should be borne very much in mind.

37. The activities of United Nations information centres and information services presented very interesting facets which sometimes had political implications. Nevertheless it would appear to be relatively simple to promote the dissemination of information by closer co-operation between DPI and non-governmental organizations. With regard to the possible closing of some information centres and the transfer of their functions to the offices of UNDP resident representatives, exhaustive studies should be conducted where appropriate, and the Governments concerned should be consulted before implementation.

38. While the globalization of the world economy required measures to ensure the involvement and growth of the developing countries, similar considerations applied to information, which must flow openly and be shared in order to guarantee economic and scientific progress, the political freedom of nations and the promotion of international peace and harmony. In today's increasingly interdependent world DPI must be equipped, transcending any budgeting constraints, with the means to continue to perform and expand its commendable activities.

39. The world was preparing to enter the second millennium and in the new age of information *homo sapiens* would become *homo electronicus*. The United Nations must be ready to facilitate that inevitable transition.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-FIFTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
11th meeting
held on
Thursday, 8 November 1990
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KARUKUBIRO-KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 77: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/45/21, A/45/533; A/SPC/45/L.8 and L.9)

1. Mr. ADUGNA (Ethiopia) said that a new spirit of understanding and co-operation had created a favourable climate for the United Nations, enabling Member States to reach consensus more easily. One area in which progress could be observed and which was of paramount interest to his country and the developing countries in general was information. Ethiopia, which had been a member of the Committee on Information since its creation, supported the establishment of a new world information and communication order to help correct the current imbalance in that field. In connection with that objective, his delegation supported the new UNESCO strategy, "Communication in the service of humanity", which had been adopted by consensus. Similarly, the activities of the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries demonstrated that concerted efforts were being made to eliminate the information gap between the developed and developing countries. For a new stable international order to emerge, information must flow smoothly and the developed countries must help the developing countries to strengthen their information media.

2. The importance of the role of the Department of Public Information, particularly its work in promoting the achievements of the United Nations, could not be overstated. There was extensive coverage of the activities of the major organs of the United Nations in the international media, and he hoped that the Department would continue to highlight the plight of the developing countries and the problems of mankind as a whole. Attention should also be paid to activities and future programmes relating to decolonization and the situation in Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Department must help to ensure that the 1990s marked the final eradication of colonialism.

3. Mr. SMERAL (Czechoslovakia) said that, with the fall of the dictatorships of Central and Eastern Europe, censorship had been abolished and freedom of expression guaranteed in the new democracies. The free flow of information was of immense importance for better understanding among peoples. Following the November revolution, Czechoslovakia had opened itself up to the international exchange of information and had made foreign news material available to its citizens with a view to ending the monopoly of information, attaining a pluralism of views and establishing free and independent mass media.

4. Czechoslovakia supported all initiatives designed to reinforce the technical and professional infrastructures of the media in the developing countries and ensure more effective co-operation in that field. One such measure was the elimination of all restrictions on trade in up-to-date communication technologies between democratic countries. The UNESCO "Communication in the service of humanity" strategy, adopted by consensus, and the creation in Warsaw of a Centre for Communications for Eastern and Central Europe would also contribute to the development of the communication capabilities of the developing countries.

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(Mr. Smeral, Czechoslovakia)

5. With regard to the activities of the Department of Public Information, the high quality and timeliness of the services of the Information Products Division were of particular note. He stressed the importance of information centres and noted that the Prague Centre offered a priceless service by providing information on various aspects of United Nations activities and on developments in Czechoslovakia. In conclusion, he thanked the Committee on Information for having recommended that Czechoslovakia should become a member of that Committee, which indicated the latter's confidence in the democratic changes which had taken place in his country.

6. Mrs. SINHA (India) said that the Department of Public Information was assuming greater weight in the context of the political changes which had led to increased expectations of the United Nations on the part of the international community. She commended the work of the Department, which, despite staffing cuts and limited resources, had been able to increase its production. Nevertheless, there were specific areas of concern to the developing countries on which the Department should disseminate more information. The United Nations information centres helped to promote awareness of the Organization throughout the world. The network of such centres should be expanded and their infrastructure upgraded in order to improve their capacity to report on United Nations activities.

7. The consensus attained by the Committee on Information regarding the strengthening of international co-operation in the field of information was an important milestone that reflected the spirit of understanding and co-operation apparent in the world today. Nevertheless, a serious information imbalance existed. The news agencies of the developed countries controlled virtually all access to information and the flow of information, and the international media frequently did not pay sufficient attention to the concerns and views of the developing world. It was necessary to make structural changes, reduce the disparity between communication infrastructures, and increase participation by developing countries in the information system. In that connection her delegation commended the work of the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication and the co-operation between the Department of Public Information and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries.

8. India was proud of the freedom and independence enjoyed by its press. In the global context, that freedom must go hand in hand with tolerance for diverse cultural and national values. Freedom implied freedom for all to inform and be informed and not the ability of the few to impose their ideas on others.

9. Mr. POERNOMO (Indonesia) said that the positive changes in international society, and, particularly in East-West relations, had transformed the global political landscape and led to new situations in the sphere of information and communication, which now had a transcontinental dimension due to satellite transmissions and computer exchanges. Yet, while even the most advanced countries were scarcely able to absorb ever more sophisticated technologies, a vast segment of mankind was being marginalized by such rapid progress, which was increasing the disparity between the developed and developing countries.

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(Mr. Poernomo, Indonesia)

10. His delegation welcomed the spirit of compromise evident at the twelfth session of the Committee on Information and the adoption by consensus, at the twenty-fifth General Conference of UNESCO, held at Paris in November 1989, of its strategy for "Communication in the service of humanity", the aim of which was to achieve better and more balanced information within the framework of the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

11. The development of training and assistance programmes, the establishment of the necessary infrastructures and the guaranteeing of compatibility between different communication systems were only some of the developments which must take place for the masses in Africa, Asia and Latin America to be able to make their voices heard and interact equitably in the international exchange of information.

12. DPI should focus increased attention on areas of special concern to Member States, especially the developing countries, such as international peace, disarmament, the environment, the status of women, economic and social development and external debt. His delegation was encouraged by the conduct of opinion polls rating the image of the United Nations favourably. Co-ordination between information centres and local, regional and international communication facilities should be intensified. Within the framework of the Conference of the Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries, a working group of regional representatives would meet in 1991 in Indonesia to examine new technological options for modernizing communications in the non-aligned countries.

13. Mr. HANNAN (Bangladesh) said that, thanks to the improvement in international relations and the relaxation of political tension, consensus had been reached on the new world information and communication order. The General Assembly, at its thirty-third session, had decided to include an agenda item entitled "Questions relating to information", since the imbalance existing in the field of information between the developed and the developing countries has already been a cause of concern. The objective conditions of that imbalance remained and the consensus attained must be utilized to change them.

14. DPI must redouble its efforts to carry out the substantive work entrusted to it. It did not suffice to give details of interviews with senior officials and issue press releases, or to brief and accredit journalists. The Department must act as a catalyst for change and problem-solving by mobilizing public opinion on certain issues. Exhibitions of photographs and journalists' encounters were not enough to convey information on the questions of Palestine and *apartheid*. The major information media must be approached and emphasis laid on the massive human rights violations in Palestine and South Africa and the economic difficulties of the least developed countries, which were not only the result of debt but were also linked to the transfer of resources to rich countries, protectionist trade barriers, the fall in the prices of raw materials and the high social cost of adjustment.

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(Mr. Hannan, Bangladesh)

15. The Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Paris in September, provided for the establishment of focal points on the least developed countries in every organ of the United Nations system for the purpose of implementing the programme of action for the 1990s. His delegation hoped that the Department of Public Information (DPI) would fulfil its mission as the focal point for information.

16. In her statement, the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had omitted any mention of the Yearbook of the United Nations in her statement. That publication was the Achilles' heel of DPI and had not appeared since 1986. His delegation would be interested to know the results of the survey that DPI had conducted among the Missions on the usefulness of the Yearbook.

17. His delegation had been surprised by the statement that DPI would have no difficulty in meeting the requests of Member States to open United Nations information centres in their capitals. That offer ran counter to the actual experience of centres such as the one at Dhaka, which was slowly withering away for lack of staff, despite repeated requests.

18. It was inappropriate to promote the United Nations as if it were a commercial product or a tourist attraction instead of highlighting its many important activities. The popularity of the United Nations depended on its effectiveness. The work of the Secretary-General and the recent achievements of the United Nations spoke for themselves and did not need opinion polls to confirm their importance. DPI could do much for the United Nations by disseminating in a professional manner information on the work of the Organization and the efforts of the international community, in accordance with the resolutions and decisions adopted.

19. Mr. EHLERS (Uruguay) said that his country was one of the staunchest defenders of a free press and free speech. Its Constitution guaranteed those fundamental rights, which had been respected even in the most difficult moments of the nation's history.

20. The problem of information was no longer a question of the means of communication, but of unbalanced information flows between the developed and developing countries. The United Nations could contribute enormously to alleviating that situation through the work of DPI, whose informational and educational material reflected the close interdependence of all the countries of the world. The effectiveness of the United Nations depended on the support it received from all Member States. That support depended in turn on the knowledge peoples and Governments had of the activities of the Organization. In order to assist in that task, his country had applied for and obtained membership in the Committee on Information. DPI needed additional funding, which might come from the reallocation of budget items or from contributions received from non-traditional external sources.

(Mr. Ehlers, Uruguay)

21. It was necessary to treat the most commonly used languages equally, to prepare videotapes for secondary students and to explore the possibility of incorporating them into the public and private school curricula of countries that requested them. While there were many worthy projects, it might always be a good idea to evaluate in advance the results expected of them in order to avoid excessive costs or foreseeable disappointments. For example, it would be most useful if the various delegations could have easy and immediate access, in some section of the Library, to all the television and radio material that was produced daily.

22. The idea that each Member State should have a United Nations information centre - or at least a specially appointed official to carry out the work associated with an information centre - and that all those countries that wished to have such a centre would provide the necessary funds was not very realistic.

23. Mrs. TAHIR-KHELI (United States of America) said that media interest in the United Nations had increased substantially in the past two years, especially during the past three months, as the Organization had responded to the act of aggression against Kuwait. The potential of the United Nations as a force for peace and stability had rarely been clearer.

24. Mr. TALT (Iraq), speaking on a point of order, asked the representative of the United States to confine her comments to agenda item 77.

25. The CHAIRMAN asked all delegations to bear in mind that the Committee was discussing questions relating to information.

26. Mrs. TAHIR-KHELI (United States of America) said that the media constantly reaffirmed the position of President Bush and President Gorbachev, stated jointly and firmly at Helsinki, that international peace was not compatible with allowing larger States to devour their smaller neighbours. Her delegation commended DPI on the energy and resourcefulness that it had brought to the task of disseminating information on the crisis.

27. However, DPI had not been able to do enough owing to a number of restrictions that limited its flexibility to respond fully and quickly. DPI should develop a strategy for supporting the United Nations goal of settling the Gulf crisis. It was of paramount importance that all elements of DPI should be mobilized to emphasize the historical role that the United Nations was playing in that regard. Her delegation supported efforts to ensure that DPI was effective and efficient, that it had the financial and material resources necessary to carry out its mandate, and that it continued to focus on the task of promoting an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations.

28. Her delegation welcomed the spirit of co-operation and flexibility that had guided the members of the Committee on Information in achieving consensus on two draft resolutions. It was to be hoped that, in the same spirit, the Special Political Committee and the General Assembly would be able to reach a consensus on both resolutions. That would allow the Committee on Information to fulfil its mandate of providing assistance and guidance to increase the effectiveness of DPI.

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(Mrs. Tahir-Kheli, United States)

29. With respect to draft resolution I, entitled "Information in service of humanity" (A/45/21, p. 17), the Government and the private sector of her country believed that reliable, free and independent news and information services and a well-informed public were fundamental not only to political freedom, but also to economic development. They were committed to assisting the development of independent media, both public and private, in other countries and to broadening the free flow of information and news the world over. In that connection, she referred to the wide-ranging efforts of the United States Agency for International Development in various spheres. Moreover, government and private institutions and non-profit organizations in the United States were training journalists from developing countries in various information and communications fields.

30. The information revolution was by its very nature global and democratizing, and it had a tendency to spread. However, it flourished best where there were open frontiers and an open attitude to all kinds of information. It was undeniable that, in the past few years, there had been a general call for free speech, a free press and freely elected Governments. That new openness was not only a result of the information revolution; it would also provide an impetus for its globalization.

31. Mr. FAWZY (Egypt) said that the fact that the Committee on Information had reached a consensus on the draft resolutions did not mean that the problems had been resolved, since the flow of information remained unbalanced. To achieve a new world information and communication order that was free and just, it was necessary to restructure the present order to include all nations with a view to promoting understanding and enriching the cultural and national identities of all countries.

32. The restructuring of DPI should be supported, as long as it did not affect the efficiency of priority programmes. In that connection, it was necessary to implement fully the resolutions of the General Assembly and to continue to emphasize the activities relating to the struggle against *apartheid*, the question of Palestine, the Palestinian *intifadah* and questions relating to economic and social development.

33. In spite of the efforts made, it was clear from the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/50 that many United Nations information centres were facing difficulties because of a lack of resources and manpower; the centre in Cairo was an example. The Department of Public Information should prepare a comprehensive global plan to assess the work of the United Nations information centres with a view to enhancing their effectiveness.

34. After commending the efforts of UNESCO to assist the communication media in Eastern Europe and calling upon it to extend that aid to other regions, he expressed his delegation's support of the new seminar planned by UNESCO and the Department of Public Information on possible modes of developing an independent and pluralistic press in Africa. He also requested UNESCO and the Department of Public Information to consider the possibility of co-operating with the Institute for Training of African Broadcasters in Cairo.

35. Mr. GARDEZI (Pakistan) said that the General Assembly's adoption by consensus of the draft resolutions on questions relating to information would be a milestone in the work concerning that important subject. That result had been made possible by the dedicated work of the Committee on Information. The consensus would demonstrate that the world community was more resolved than ever to eliminate barriers in the pursuit of common goals in all areas, including information.

36. A spirit of goodwill was necessary to correct existing imbalances between developed and developing countries. The budget and infrastructure of a single Western news agency greatly surpassed those of all the agencies in the developing world, which represented more than 80 per cent of the human race. The new world information and communication order would facilitate the transfer of technology from developed to developing countries, the sharing of professional expertise and the establishment of a real and balanced exchange of information to check the abuses being perpetrated within the current structure. In order to promote mutual respect and understanding, it was imperative that due regard should be shown to the socio-cultural and religious values and traditions of all countries. In an interdependent world, equitable economic development and social progress could not be achieved without a new, just and balanced world information and communication order that would strengthen peace and international understanding.

37. The first task of the new popular Government of Pakistan had been to lift the state of emergency and to restore fundamental rights and freedoms, and the Prime Minister had shown his determination to further strengthen freedom of the press in Pakistan. His delegation attached great importance to the use of radio broadcasts to disseminate information on United Nations activities, and he mentioned the success of the Urdu-language programmes, which served more than 100 million people in Asia and the Pacific. The Department of Public Information should strengthen its work in the region.

38. Of special interest to Pakistan was the co-operation with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and with UNESCO. He noted the activities of UNESCO concerning its International Programme for the Development of Communication, particularly those activities designed to foster co-operation among the communication media in developing countries in the area of information. He called upon UNESCO to intensify its efforts but noted that the funds allocated for the activities of its Programme were insufficient and needed to be supplemented.

39. Since Pakistan and other developing countries were not adequately represented in the Department of Public Information, the principle of geographical representation should be observed in recruiting, especially at the senior level. The United Nations Correspondents Association had carried out useful work in disseminating information about United Nations activities around the world, and the Department of Public Information should extend all necessary facilities to it. His delegation fully supported the requests of Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica and Uruguay for membership in the Committee on Information.

40. Mrs. RYDLE (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that those countries regretted that freedom of information, an indispensable component of democracy and development which was proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was too often subject to violations; they paid tribute to the journalists who had been imprisoned, abused or killed while carrying out their duty.

41. The Nordic countries were concerned about existing imbalances among nations in access to the means of information and recognized the need to expand the communication capacity of developing countries, as indicated by their long-standing support of the International Programme for the Development of Communication established by UNESCO.

42. The Nordic countries welcomed the consensus reached in the Committee on Information, which opened up new possibilities for progress in the field of information, as well as the constructive results of the twenty-fifth General Conference of UNESCO. There was every indication that the current far-reaching changes in international relations would require the Department of Public Information to assume increased responsibilities. The Nordic countries would welcome the development of their dialogue with the Department and were interested in the possibility of helping to strengthen the Organization's capacity to promote peace and understanding on the one hand, and world-wide awareness of the Organization's role and activities on the other.

43. Mr. NIKULIN (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the growing interdependence of countries and regions was creating a new human community. Information played an increasingly important role in that community, to the point where it was legitimate to assume that an interruption of the flow of information would quickly result in a situation whose seriousness would equal that of an economic collapse. In a world of such interdependence, progress could only be made on the basis of a free flow of information with open channels of communication at both the national and international levels, which meant that humanity could no longer do without a global information infrastructure.

44. His delegation was convinced that the success achieved thus far in international activities illustrated the future direction which information must take, i.e., towards greater democratization of information. There was also a need to see that the increasing convergence of formerly opposed ideologies was reflected in co-operation in the exchange of information.

45. Those developments implied new tasks for the United Nations. Therefore, as the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had explained, the scope of activity of the Organization's information organs had been broadened. In consequence, the traditional activities of those organs relating to such issues as peace, Namibia, *apartheid*, Palestine and economic development were being supplemented by a series of activities relating to the environment, which occupied a prominent place in the programme of activities for the coming decade. The Department was also strengthening its co-operation with various United Nations organs and with information agencies.

(Mr. Nikulin, Byelorussian SSR)

46. The reports before the Committee confirmed the international community's concern about the environment and about the effects of atomic radiation, particularly from the Chernobyl accident. It was necessary to launch international campaigns to aid the victims of that accident. His delegation hoped that the Department of Public Information would increase its participation in that area of international co-operation, which should focus on the long-term consequences of the accident. In the short term, the Department could assume responsibility for broadcasting an appeal for help for the victims, which the General Assembly would address to the international community.

47. Mr. BEN LAMINE (Tunisia) endorsed the opinions which the representative of Algeria had expressed on behalf of the five countries of the Maghreb and added that for the first time, the North and the South were in agreement on the delicate subject under consideration and that their agreement reflected a more appropriate conception of international relations.

48. The question of information was of the highest importance, since it was closely linked to a fundamental human right: the right to a wealth of information, disseminated by free institutions, that promoted the full development of the human being. The developing countries understood the importance which the developed countries attached to information oriented towards fundamental freedoms but felt that that focus should be improved upon so that information could also lend itself to the satisfaction of basic necessities. Moreover, the international community could not resolve global problems without a balanced flow of information. It was therefore inadmissible for one part of that community to try to impose its point of view on the others.

49. His delegation congratulated DPI on its work, but expressed the opinion that more emphasis should be placed on questions relating to international peace and security, the situation in the Middle East, the environment and the role of women. He was satisfied with the work done by the Information Centre in Tunis, although he was sure that it could be further improved. The productive meeting of Directors of Information Centres based in Arabic-speaking countries, held in Tunis from 21 to 23 March 1990, was an example of the type of activity which should be promoted. Co-operation in the field between DPI and UNDP should also be strengthened. Finally, he noted that the principle of equitable geographical distribution must be applied strictly in DPI.

50. Mr. MAHMOUD (Lebanon) said that information was a core element of modern development and reflected the complexity and interrelation of national interests. In a changing world, in which the United Nations was regaining its central role, DPI, besides administering the communications network, would become a catalyst for intellectual activity.

51. The disparity existing between developed and developing countries in the field of information affected the capability of the developing countries to disseminate their ideas and values. Lebanon supported the free flow of information and genuine objectivity in covering international and regional issues. The frequent attempts

(Mr. Mahmoud, Lebanon)

to marginalize the influence of the United Nations and its resolutions, and the systematic attacks by some developed countries whose interests often contradicted United Nations principles should be rejected.

52. Lebanon had played a leading role in the field of the dissemination of information in the Middle East and, despite the agony of the past 15 years, remained the publishing capital of the Arab world. With the restoration of constitutional institutions and the tendency to expand the authority of the Government under a united army, it was expected that the mass media would contribute to the reunification of the country in the service of justice, peace and development in the region. He expressed his Government's gratitude for the uninterrupted activities of the United Nations Information Centre in Lebanon in the difficult circumstances of the past 15 years, and its commitment to co-operate with DPI to enhance the Centre's regional role.

53. Mr. GARAD (Somalia) said that, with the end of the cold war and confrontation between the super-Powers, a spirit of co-operation and compromise in relations between States reigned in many parts of the world. Earlier in the year, Namibia had taken its rightful place in the community of free and independent nations and Nelson Mandela had been released, raising the hopes of the black majority in South Africa that soon they would be able to participate in the democratic life of their country. The aspirations of the German people and the Yemeni people had been fulfilled with the peaceful reunification of their countries. Somalia had recently joined the other countries of the Horn of Africa, under the aegis of the Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development, in working for socio-economic development and the restoration of peace and harmony in the area.

54. His delegation welcomed the positive results achieved by UNESCO and considered the adoption by consensus of the strategy for "Communication in the service of humanity" very important. That strategy was based on freedom of information and the need for the international community to encourage the free and more balanced flow of information at the national and global levels. He welcomed the progress that had been made in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/50, in co-operation between DPI and the News Agencies Pool of Non-aligned Countries, and in activities regarding African recovery and development and the struggle against the policy of *apartheid*. Nevertheless, since the scarcity of resources limited the participation of the news agencies of many developing and least-developed countries in the Pool, it was imperative that such agencies should receive the necessary financial assistance.

55. His delegation commended DPI for disseminating information on Africa through its publication *Africa Recovery*. Given the tendency of the Western media to highlight the negative side of events in developing countries, however, that publication should give greater coverage to the positive developments taking place in many African countries. DPI should also emphasize the problems that still had to be resolved: the eradication of *apartheid*, the situation in the Middle East, the question of Palestine and the Palestinian *intifadah*, and problems of social and economic development.

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56. Mr. ZAWELS (Argentina) said he hoped that the General Assembly would confirm the consensus achieved at the twelfth session of the Committee on Information. That consensus had not been a coincidence or a mere reaction to external change, but the fruit of a long process of reflection and analysis.

57. Freedom of the press and freedom of information had been recognized in the Constitution of Argentina of 1853. More than 130 years earlier, the Argentine thinker, Juan Bautista Alberdi, speaking of freedom of the press, had said that it was "a natural right and an inherent attribute of man".

58. That freedom, which allowed a choice among various information sources, was directly related to the level of development of the peoples. The activities of DPI were directed towards those peoples, as part of the growing United Nations involvement in the life of all the inhabitants of Earth, especially in matters relating to peace and security.

59. The enormous task of DPI also required the allocation of greater resources. DPI should be given greater budgetary financing and should be allowed to explore the possibilities of co-operation with the private sector in various countries.

60. There was a United Nations Information Centre in Argentina, which also had subregional jurisdiction and which should seek imaginative formulae to broaden its field of action and increase its efficiency.

61. After stating that greater use should be made of audio-visual communications media, he commended the work of the Secretary-General and welcomed the delegations of Czechoslovakia, Jamaica, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Uruguay, to membership in the Committee on Information.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-FIFTH SESSION
Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
12th meeting
held on
Monday, 12 November 1990
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KARUKUBIRO-KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 71: SCIENCE AND PEACE (continued) (A/SPC/45/L.11)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the Committee to draft resolution A/SPC/45/L.11 and announced that Romania, Sierra Leone and Suriname had joined the sponsors.

AGENDA ITEM 77: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/45/21, A/45/533; A/SPC/45/L.8, L.9, L.12 and L.13)

2. Mr. AL-ABBADI (Jordan) said that the information on détente in the present-day world, at the end of the cold war, which was being disseminated by the media was likely to promote international co-operation and highlight the functions of the United Nations. The promotion of co-operation should help in the progressive strengthening of understanding between the countries and peoples of the world. The importance of the role of the media was beyond question; what was truly important was to give the media guidance so that they could carry out their mission fully, instead of being used to widen the gulf between the developed and the developing countries. It was essential to achieve a balanced dissemination of news and to eliminate all obstacles to the freedom of the press. To that end, the most developed countries should not delay the transfer of their technological advances nor resist placing them at the disposal of the information infrastructure of the developing countries, in conformity with the UNESCO programme entitled "Communication in the service of humanity".

3. The Department of Public Information (DPI) had played a major role in making public opinion aware of the scale of the Palestine question and of the intifadah and in giving a clearer idea of the human rights violations committed by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinians living in their own land. Mention should also be made of the efforts made by the Department to inform public opinion about many important matters, such as the policy of racial discrimination pursued by South Africa, the independence process in Namibia, the activities undertaken to promote disarmament and to prevent pollution of the environment or abuse, and all aspects of the work of the United Nations. It was to be hoped that DPI would also disseminate information on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in 1992.

4. DPI should receive financial support, technical assistance and whatever facilities it needed to continue its work, to give greater impetus to the activities of the information centres already in existence and to create others where appropriate, bearing in mind the need for a balanced geographical distribution of the staff, in particular the senior officials. Finally, his delegation requested DPI to increase its output in the Arabic language, and expressed the hope that the General Assembly would reaffirm and expand the consensus achieved at the twelfth session of the Committee on Information by adopting draft resolutions A/SPC/45/L.8 and L.9 without a vote.

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5. Mr. EKOUMILONG (Cameroon) said that, in order to build the world of which all dreamed, there was a need to adopt new forms of thinking, supported by freely circulated objective information. Freedom of information was essential to the development and peaceful progress of human society. The developing countries had highlighted the shortcomings inherent in the present system, which represented everything that stood in the way of the democratic and egalitarian concept of the new world information and communication order.

6. Cameroon was at the forefront of freedom of information, and the official and the private press existed side by side there. His delegation welcomed the consensus achieved at the twenty-fifth General Conference of UNESCO and the adoption of the UNESCO medium-term plan and its strategy for "Communication in the service of humanity". Cameroon was ready to co-operate with all countries and organizations which were willing to help in building a modern communications network.

7. The changes which had occurred in the world and the successes achieved by the United Nations had recently made the Organization the focus of world attention as the preferred forum for the solution of many of the problems facing mankind. In consequence, it was essential that DPI make the maximum possible use of its limited resources to develop new and effective programmes, avoiding any kind of duplication of effort. Cameroon welcomed and encouraged co-operation with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, the Eco-Pool of the News Agencies and the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as with other news agencies and intergovernmental and regional organizations (A/45/21, para. 51), with a view to giving wider dissemination to information on all the activities of the United Nations. In connection with draft resolution II approved by the Committee on Information, the Department should give absolute priority to the development problems of Africa and broadcast more frequent and longer radio and television programmes on that topic, in both English and French.

8. After praising the information activities directed against apartheid and stating that such activities should be intensified until they reached the entire people of South Africa, he expressed the opinion that the number of United Nations information centres should be increased, and that their activities should be clearly and specifically defined. There was an information centre in Cameroon, and the country was proud of it, although it was to be hoped that a director would be appointed in the near future to replace the official who was fulfilling that function temporarily.

9. Mr. POPESCU (Romania) said the consensus reached at the twelfth session of the Commitee on Information, and the new UNESCO programme entitled "Communication in the service of humanity" were of major importance for the promotion of the spirit of co-operation among all Member States. His delegation commended the endeavours made by DPI to make the work of the United Nations widely known and welcomed the fact that, while being restructured and technologically upgraded, it had continued to fulfil its mission with increasing efficiency. He then referred to the activities of the United Nations information centres around the world, which often offered the only link between the United Nations and the communications media,

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(Mr. Popescu, Romania)

educational and cultural institutions and non-governmental organizations in the countries where they were located.

10. As a result of the profound changes Romania was undergoing, freedom of information was now recognized there as a fundamental human right and a basic dimension of democracy. In the new historic context, Romania had decided to withdraw the reservations and interpretative statements it had made on 15 January 1989 in connection with the Concluding Document of the Vienna Follow-up Meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Romania was taking action for the full implementation of all the provisions of that Document, including those relating to the full and free dissemination of all types of information. Romania would endeavour to take a more active part in the international information and communication process and had submitted an application for membership in the European Telecommunications Satellite Organization (EUTELSAT). Freedom of expression was a reality in present-day Romania. In order to reinforce it, consideration was being given to a new law on audio-visual mass media, based on democratic European legislation, the aim of which was to guarantee the independence and impartiality of the public sector of the information and communications media with regard to free competition.

11. Ms. CHAN (Singapore) said that, while her delegation was pleased that the Committee on Information had reached a consensus, it believed that it should renew its discussion on ways of attaining a freer, wider and better balanced flow of information and ensure that its discussions focused on specific and practical issues.

12. The great scientific and technological breakthroughs of the second half of the twentieth century had profoundly changed the way information was disseminated and, during the Gulf crisis, it had been seen that televised news transmitted information faster than diplomatic dispatches. The fact that direct and satellite broadcasting had crossed national boundaries had raised concern in the countries of Western Europe about the impact of foreign television programmes on local viewers. It was feared that, in time, television programmes from the United States of America would undermine the distinctiveness of national cultures. At one point, the Ministers of Culture of the European Community had been considering the possibility of subsidizing trans-European enterprises to counter the onslaught of programmes from the United States. If the developed countries were concerned about the impact of communications technology on their young people, it would certainly be much more of a cause for alarm in developing countries, whose political and socio-economic systems were still fragile and in the process of institutionalization. By crossing national boundaries, satellite television affected the dynamics of domestic events, inadvertently setting the pace and promoting international reaction. All Governments must acquaint themselves with the ways of the world media so as to be able to transmit their views effectively and not be placed at a disadvantage with regard to those countries that were completely at home with the technology.

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(Ms. Chan, Singapore)

13. The print media had also undergone a technological revolution and could take advantage of the great advances in that area. Many publications were printed simultaneously at several locations around the world, and easy satellite access to the print media meant that global and regional publications could more readily reach the domestic market of ideas. Governments had to contend with an additional source of ideas that influenced domestic public opinion. Furthermore, the flow of viewpoints tended to be in one direction, from the wealthier developed countries to the rest of the world, and it was therefore important to strengthen the flow in the other direction.

14. The situation she had described could be seen in Singapore, which, in order to advance economically, politically and culturally, had recognized tht it must be open to ideas from outside sources. The leading international newspapers and magazines were circulated in Singapore, and broadcasts from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) could be heard. The population could assimilate that information because of its mastery of the English language and because it had the necessary information technology. Although that had positive aspects, it also raised the issue of just how much outside sources should be allowed to participate in the domestic political debate. The problem would be exacerbated, because information technology could totally revolutionize the concept of participation and Governments would have to seek new means to make their viewpoints known and to compete with the new actors in their own territories. It was essential to determine how to make a distinction between access to information and interference in the national debate of other countries.

15. Mr. ALSAIDI (Yemen) said that by facilitating communication and the transfer of technology among all countries, the information revolution was bound to create greater understanding and thereby strengthen international peace and security. Notwithstanding the differences in the area of information and communication between the developed and the developing countries, it was to be hoped that in the current period of greater co-operation, an objective flow of information in both directions could be achieved, traditions of all countries would be respected and assistance would be given to the developing countries to help to reduce the disparities that still persisted. Greater co-operation was needed between UNESCO, the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and the League of Arab States.

16. Article 26 of the Constitution of reunified Yemen guaranteed its citizens the right to participate freely in the economic, social and political life of the country. In that spirit, 22 political parties had been created in Yemen, representing all political and spiritual trends of opinion in the country, and there were currently more than 53 newspapers and magazines. Reunified Yemen required the support of the United Nations in order to ensure peace and stability both at home and in the countries of the region.

17. His delegation had submitted a draft resolution calling for the establishment of a United Nations information centre in Sanaa (A/SPC/45/L.13, para. 1). Yemen would contribute to the establishment of that centre and hoped that the Committee would approve the draft resolution by consensus.

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18. Mr. KORSHENI (United Republic of Tanzania), after commending UNESCO for its work, called upon it to proceed with its plans to hold an African press seminar in Windhoek, Namibia. It was to be hoped that such meetings would provide the necessary impetus for generating mutual trust and understanding, because all countries were ready to co-operate in that regard. The time had come for developed and developing countries to give closer consideration to the need to establish a new, more just and effective world information and communication order to minimize the inequalities existing between the two groups of countries.

19. The Special Political Committee should come up with proposals on how DPI could best fulfil its mandate. Attention must be given to the proposal that the Department should be allowed a certain degree of flexibility in allocating its scarce resources. However, priority should as far as possible be given to the implementation of programmes mandated by the General Assembly.

20. His delegation was once again compelled to remind DPI of its obligation to fill the post of Director of the United Nations Information Office in Dar es Salaam, which had been vacant for the past 15 years. The Department appeared to be overlooking its mandate to extend financial assistance to Tanzania, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Angola in order to supplement their meagre resources so that they could continue broadcasting anti-*apartheid* programmes to South Africa. His delegation welcomed the suggestion that a United Nations information centre should be established in Namibia, and urged that the process should be accelerated and that the United Nations, and DPI in particular, should bear the costs of establishing and operating the centre.

21. Mr. DENISOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the profound changes taking place in the United Nations and elsewhere had transformed the Organization into a mechanism capable of establishing a new international order. That had a favourable impact in many areas, including information. For example, ideological hostility was becoming an anachronism. The Soviet Union, which until recently had been regarded as a "closed" society, was currently demonstrating an unprecedented degree of openness and was contributing along with other States to the elimination of ideological barriers. It had recently adopted a law on the press, which brought its legislation into line with international standards, and would help to democratize Soviet society and promote international co-operation in the area of information. Earlier, the Soviet Union had also proposed the establishment of a world information programme aimed at guaranteeing the free circulation of information, in line with internationally agreed standards.

22. The consensus reached at the twelfth session of the Committee on Information confirmed the determination of Member States to put an end to conceptual disputes and to seek joint solutions to practical issues. In that context, the Soviet Union recognized unreservedly that freedom of the press and information was a basic human right as stipulated in the relevant international instruments. It appreciated the concern of the developing countries over the existing imbalances in the area of information, and believed that efforts must be intensified to overcome them. The problem should be approached not in a spirit of confrontation, but with a view to promoting co-operation among Member States. The Soviet Union was prepared to co-operate with States which sought to improve their communication systems.

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23. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Department of Public Information was generally performing its principal functions well. However, it felt that United Nations public information activities should be enhanced, and agreed with the view that the Department should be more independent, since that would enable it to respond more flexibly to information needs, and to plan and implement programmes and projects that were better suited to current events. In that context, the co-ordination of activities between the Department and the specialized agencies of the United Nations acquired a new importance. It was imperative to minimize duplication of information activities and to spare the Department from having to perform inappropriate functions that depleted its resources and hindered its production capacity and its use of information channels. The Department's technological advances were impressive, but they contrasted with the technical backwardness of its information centres.

24. The fact that most of the co-operative activities between the Department and non-governmental organizations took place in New York posed some problems for the Soviet Union. It would be advisable to organize some of those activities in other regions as well. He supported the view of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information that the Department needed more flexibility in using the potential of organizations willing to co-operate in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

25. Mr. WAGUE (Mali) said that international relations had made positive progress in the previous year, as demonstrated by the constructive spirit that had prevailed during the twelfth session of the Committee on Information. His delegation felt that it was important to take advantage of those advances to promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order. If those efforts were to succeed, it was necessary to enhance the capacity of the communication media in developing countries, especially since the hegemony of the countries of the North in the field of communications encouraged them to attempt to impose their values on the countries of the South. He noted that developing countries were the target of press campaigns to change their moral values and cultural identity, and that some media organs of the North were engaged in disinformation and in broadcasting apocalyptic visions of events in countries of the South.

26. With regard to the activities of the Department of Public Information, there was a need to further emphasize the programmes on the maintenance of international peace and security, the struggle against *apartheid*, environmental problems, disarmament, the advancement of women, the problems of development (including that of external debt) and the campaign against illicit drug trafficking. It was necessary to strengthen as much as possible the implementation of the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the Department, to correct existing imbalances among the working languages, to consolidate and broaden co-operation between the Department and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, and to provide the United Nations information centres with the necessary resources. It was worth emphasizing the work of UNESCO in establishing and strengthening communications structures in developing countries.

(Mr. Wague, Mali)

27. Freedom of expression and information was respected in Mali. There was a continuing increase in the number of independent publications and of activities to strengthen freedom of the press. A wide-ranging literacy campaign had been undertaken, which aimed at providing literacy training for 1 million persons per year. The Government was making efforts to improve and diversify both the facilities and the content of information services, especially radio and television.

28. Mr. CHAVUNDUKA (Zimbabwe) said that the new climate of co-operation in international relations should be enhanced through, inter alia, the establishment of a new world information and communication order based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information among all countries. The consensus reached at the twelfth session of the Committee on Information was an important turning-point in the consideration of those questions, and should constitute a basis for concrete steps towards, among other things, developing and strengthening the communication capacities of developing countries, so that opinions could be formed on the basis of the experiences of both the North and the South, not only those of the countries with the necessary communication capacities to influence other regions. The faith of the developing world in the common goals of the international community depended on the establishment of the new order.

29. The efforts of the Department of Public Information to mobilize emergency assistance for the development of Namibia were noteworthy. His delegation welcomed the Department's decision to open an information centre in Windhoek in early 1991. That centre would play an important role in Namibia's development process. The United Nations should meet all the costs of establishing and maintaining the centre, as it had in some other cases. It was imperative to continue the anti-apartheid activities in order to put the developments in South Africa in their proper perspective. The timely production and distribution of anti-apartheid radio programmes should continue until apartheid was eradicated. In addition, the international community should maintain its firm support of the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people, and the Department should vigorously continue its special programme on the question of Palestine.

30. The work of UNESCO in the field of information was invaluable. He hoped that the consensus reached at its twenty-fifth General Conference on a new strategy for "Communication in the service of humanity" would enhance the effectiveness of the Organization. In particular, his delegation awaited with interest the African Press Seminar that was to be held in Namibia in early 1991.

31. Mr. BOUTS'KO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) expressed the hope that the adoption of the two draft resolutions on the item under consideration would, firstly, enable delegations to put aside confrontation in dealing with problems that involved all countries, and secondly, create conditions under which, at its next session, the Committee on Information could concentrate on system-wide activities.

32. The Secretary-General, in the report he had presented pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/50 (A/45/533), and the Under-Secretary-General for Public

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(Mr. Bouts'ko, Ukrainian SSR)

Information, in her statement, had emphasized the notable successes of the Department of Public Information, which would do credit to any good information service. Questions relating to information had been included in the Assembly's agenda in 1946 on the understanding that the information activities to be examined would be not only those of the Department, but also those of the entire United Nations system. However, the Assembly had lost sight of that objective over the years, with the result that it did not review the activities of many organizations, such as UNICEF, UNEP and FAO. That was regrettable, since one of the fundamental problems before the Special Political Committee was that of co-ordinating the components of the United Nations public information system. Moreover, the good intentions of the Committee would not bear fruit unless a way of financing the proposed programmes was found. In that regard, a detailed study should be done on the possibility of drawing on more outside sources of financing for information programmes.

33. The Committee on Information should study ways of enhancing the effectiveness of the Joint United Nations Information Committee to help the Department of Public Information to carry out all of the work requested of it, such as the proposal of the United States of America to elaborate a strategy in support of United Nations efforts to resolve the Gulf crisis.

34. As a result of the change in the information policy of the Ukrainian SSR, namely, the lifting of censorship and the liquidation of the State monopoly on the media, its national television received news programmes from the Department of Public Information. That type of activity should be further developed, although such programmes should provide more information on all the organs of the United Nations.

35. His delegation praised the Department's Audio/Visual Materials Library Unit for its interesting programmes on the Chernobyl accident and on international co-operation to deal with its consequences. He noted that the quality of press releases had improved, but that the reduction in the number of permanent posts would not help to create the necessary conditions to produce good materials. He stressed the importance of two seminars for Eastern European journalists which had been organized by UNESCO in Paris and which had been attended by Ukrainian journalists. Regional seminars could be held through the joint efforts of the various United Nations information services. Co-operation and co-ordination among those services, in addition to opening up new possibilities for better informing international public opinion, would set an example of how apparently insoluble problems could be solved through the defence and promotion of common interests.

36. Mr. GAMBARI (Nigeria) said that for the first time in eight years, broad agreement had been reached on such a contentious issue as information, thanks to the improved international environment and the flexibility shown by the members of the Committee on Information, whose co-operation with his delegation in its capacity as Chairman had facilitated the consensus. The consensus was a moral pact between developed and developing countries to reduce and ultimately eliminate existing information imbalances. It was therefore encouraging that some developed

(Mr. Gambari, Nigeria)

countries had announced their willingness to co-operate to strengthen communications infrastructure and technology for developing countries.

37. Nigeria supported the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication, and urged developed countries to increase their assistance to it. It also endorsed the plan to hold the 1991 African Press Seminar in Windhoek, and called on the Organization to give it wide publicity to enable participation by the largest possible number of African journalists.

38. At the meeting of African Ministers of Information, held in Nigeria in April 1990, plans had been developed for the establishment of a new African information and communication order with the goal of promoting regional self-reliance, increased co-operation in news-gathering, reduction of misrepresentation of the African situation, and enhancement of the continent's image.

39. Among Department of Public Information activities, special praise should be given to the publicity received by United Nations campaigns against apartheid, the economic crisis in Africa, the situation of Palestinians under Israeli occupation, the status of women, peace-keeping operations, human rights, and economic and social problems. In that context, all efforts should be made to ensure that Development Forum, a most important publication on development matters, would continue.

40. United Nations information centres represented the Organization and disseminated information about its activities, and they must be strengthened. Negotiations were proceeding for the opening of an information centre in Namibia, whose operating costs, in the opinion of his delegation, should be borne by the United Nations.

41. Mr. FUENTES IBAÑEZ (Bolivia) said that communications, with the immediate objective of providing the most accurate information, had been one of the areas that had received least attention from the developing countries. Information must be oriented to fulfil a social function, such as respect for the human condition and the right of mankind to live in dignity and security.

42. Since the Second World War, surprising technological advances had occurred, but they had not always been utilized appropriately. They had soon been converted into new commercial tools, often supplanting the constructive reasons for their establishment. Sounds and images communicating ideas had been transmitted over the airwaves to all regions of the world. That flow had reached developing countries, but not always in an appropriate way. It risked becoming another form of alienation, disseminating ideas, ways of life and attitudes foreign to their traditions and customs.

43. The importance of the new world information and communication order must be emphasized, parallel to the new international economic order and movements to strengthen the individuality of countries struggling to build a society true to

(Mr. Fuentes Ibañez, Bolivia)

their traditions, and based on the principles proclaimed in the United Nations Charter.

44. In draft resolution A/SPC/45/L.9, paragraph 3 (a) very wisely recommended that the Department of Public Information should "continue to maintain consistent editorial independence and accuracy in reporting all the material it produces". Expansion of information services and the more adequate dissemination of information would contribute to the development of an analytical ability, and perhaps later could lead to the establishment of an information code of ethics for the use of journalists desiring to give truthful information. Measures restricting freedom of information should not be proposed, however. It would be more appropriate to intensify efforts to persuade the public through education, so that public opinion itself would reject programmes using objectionable topics as entertainment.

45. Bolivia shared the concern of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information over the Department's scarce resources to fulfil its task, even more so, considering the disproportionate ability of private information agencies to inundate the market with easily accessible products. The Department was the appropriate channel through which to reach the most remote peoples with its message of hope and encouragement. Young people anxious to be useful to their communities should be trained so that later they would form the network communicating the principles embodied in the Charter.

46. Ms. VAN ANTWERPEN (Namibia) noted that the attitude of co-operation and goodwill observed in all United Nations agencies and bodies was facilitating consensus on many important issues, such as information and communication, which had once been controversial. The twelfth session of the Committee on Information had been a watershed in the debate on the subject, and the consensus obtained regarding important points was a fundamental contribution to the success of the work of the United Nations. It had been stressed that the existing information and communication order was a legacy of history. In that connection, it was sad to note that imbalances between the developed North and the less privileged South still remained and had further widened. Putting an end to that situation would require, on the one hand, contributions from countries with resources and technology, and on the other, new strategies and creative programmes from the Department of Public Information.

47. Greater attention needed to be given to questions such as the elimination of *apartheid* and all forms of discrimination, the continued existence of colonialism, the plight of the Palestinian people and underdevelopment. On behalf of the Government, the delegation of Namibia commended the Department for having continued to disseminate information on Namibia, pursuant to Security Council resolution 435 (1978) of 29 September 1978. Furthermore, she was pleased to mention that Namibia would be the venue for the African Press Seminar in 1991, and that the Government was committed to the development of a free and independent press. Freedom always implied responsibility, however, and must be accompanied by balanced and objective reporting.

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(Ms. Van Antwerpen, Namibia)

48. United Nations information centres were of great importance, especially in developing countries. Namibia welcomed the establishment of such a centre in Windhoek, as provided for in General Assembly resolution 44/50 of 8 December 1989. It was possible, however, that the Government might not be able to meet certain requirements for its establishment. It would need United Nations support.

49. Mr. SALAS (Mexico) said that the new international panorama had brought along with it a significant renewal of the United Nations, which now had the central role intended for it in 1945. That new international order and the need to enhance trust, co-operation and multilateralism between countries required a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process (A/SPC/45/L.8), but even more an adequate response to that call. Furthermore, information brought with it strength and power for change which must be harnessed. Mexico therefore supported the draft resolution on United Nations public information policies and activities (A/SPC/45/L.9).

50. The work of the Department of Public Information must be intensified, above all in developing countries. In effect, to measure the success of its campaigns, it was not enough to consider the degree of access to the information media of developed countries. It was important to achieve a balance between mass dissemination of information, frequently selective, predominating in the media of those countries, and the objective needs for information on the United Nations and its evolving tasks.

51. The use of information and the right to receive it were essential elements of the full development of all society in freedom. The consensus achieved in the Committee on Information, as well as the new UNESCO strategy entitled "Communication in the service of humanity" were firm steps towards the achievement of that objective.

52. Mr. BOUKADOUM (Algeria), speaking on behalf of the Arab Maghreb Union, mentioned the optimistic atmosphere in the Special Political Committee, which was meeting after the consensus achieved in the Committee on Information. Also, the new strategy adopted by UNESCO opened prospects for dialogue and mutual understanding. Because of the positive changes in international relations, it was to be hoped that a new, more just and more balanced world information and communication order could be established on the basis of respect for the traditions of all countries.

53. The Maghreb States affirmed the need for every country to be free to express its own identity and map out its own course, and rejected any attempt to use the media to distort the facts. In that context, attention should be drawn to the work accomplished by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Group of 77. In an interdependent world, with the prevailing atmosphere of détente and the end of the cold war, the views of all countries must be listened to and the imbalance and differences between developed and developing countries must be eliminated. Unfortunately, there were many obstacles to the new world information and communication order, and information must flow not only from the developed to the

(Mr. Boukadoum, Algeria)

developing countries, but also in the opposite direction. Since the existing information system was dominated by a powerful minority which controlled and directed it, the Arab Maghreb Union called for the preparation of an information charter enshrining the principles and ethics of the global information system based on the objective of knowing the factual truth. The Arab Maghreb Union trusted that the Committee on Information could submit a draft information charter for consideration at the following session of the General Assembly.

54. Mention should be made of the effective role of the Department of Public Information (DPI) in spreading information about United Nations activities. The Department's resources and flexibility must be increased to ensure greater effectiveness. Increased support to DPI activities relating to the developing countries, more assistance to journalists from developing countries and closer co-operation among the news agencies of the non-aligned countries were also needed.

55. Some institutions and universities of the Maghreb region had expressed the desire to see the establishment of specialized United Nations centres and undertook to make information materials in Arabic available to such centres. DPI should give priority to the dissemination of information on issues involving a threat to international peace and security such as the question of Palestine, the Middle East, racial discrimination and the serious economic situation of the African countries.

56. Mr. MORA GODOY (Cuba) said that, despite financial and budgetary limitations, DPI had accomplished a difficult task. For years the Department had been drawing attention to changing trends and helping to provide deeper insights into the role of communication in social development. Its mechanisms and structures must be strengthened in order to attain the Organization's objectives in that field. To speak of information and communication was to speak of survival, development and preservation of cultural identity. However, it was no secret to anyone that there was a chasm between those objectives and the everyday reality faced by the developing countries, nor that the underdeveloped world had no access to the information which the major transnational communication centres manipulated and monopolized but failed to direct towards that very purpose of fostering friendly relations among peoples. Aware as they were of that situation and that the principle of sovereign equality among nations applied also to that domain, the developing countries had emphasized the need for urgent action to change the situation of inequality, dependence and imbalance to which they were subjected in the sphere of information and communication - a necessity that had been reaffirmed at the Third Conference of Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries, held recently in Havana. The new order would be an irreversible step forward in the right to communicate and to be informed objectively; its increasing relevance today was due to the fact that the very nature of information had remained unchanged and that the introduction of new information technologies went hand in hand with a continuing transfer of decision-making to transnational levels.

57. His delegation was grateful to DPI for the part it had played in the Namibian independence process. The Department should continue to give priority to issues

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(Mr. Mora Godoy, Cuba)

concerning Palestine and *apartheid*. Moreover, it might consider the possibility of promoting a world decolonization campaign to coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and of proclaiming the last decade of the century the decolonization decade.

58. Finally, his delegation wished to denounce certain schemes of the United States aimed at continuing to transmit radio and television broadcasts to Cuba contrary to the wish of the Cuban Government and people. For all that country's claims to be the driving force behind the current process of strengthening co-operation, understanding and peace, its positions *vis-à-vis* Cuba had not changed. On the contrary, they had become more hostile. As part of its psychological war against the Cuban revolution and under the guise of the so-called free flow of information, the United States had decided in 1990 to transmit television broadcasts to Cuba from military installations located in Florida for a three-month trial period. The decision had been denounced by the relevant communications bodies as a grave violation of international law and an attempt to violate the sovereignty of a State. The undertaking had no political, legal or indeed moral justification. In that connection, the Government of the United States was the only Government to prohibit by law any telecommunications exchange with Cuba, and failed to renounce its policy of blockade against the country, which had repeatedly stated its advocacy of free exchange with any other country in that field, subject to respect for international law and its own sovereignty.

59. Eight months after its multi-million dollar manoeuvre against Cuba had been launched, United States television was not received in Cuba - in other words, it had failed. Cuba failed to understand why, despite that failure and despite the fact that the competent bodies had declared its activities illegal, the United States continued its all-out assaults on a country which had merely sought to exercise its right freely to choose its own economic, political and social system. Come what might, and however much that country tried to take advantage of the new circumstances to reaffirm its hegemony, Cuba would not abandon either its principles or its revolution, nor give way one iota on its achievements, and would not renounce its sovereignty and its independence.

60. Mr. AL-ZAYANI (Bahrain) thanked UNESCO for the efforts it had made, in co-operation with the Department of Public Information, to strengthen the information infrastructures of the developing countries through its International Programme for the Development of Communication. The consensus achieved held out promise that agreement could be reached on other questions concerning information and communication, since the climate seemed conducive to international dialogue and co-operation. At UNESCO's twenty-fifth General Conference the strategy for "Communication in the service of humanity" had been adopted by consensus, and international co-operation on various aspects of information had been strengthened.

61. It was the duty of the media, news agencies and journalists to disseminate impartial information in order to fulfil the supreme objective of establishing a new world information and communication order, since the interests of peoples were now interdependent and they shared similar aspirations.

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(Mr. Al-Zayani, Bahrain)

62. The Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had said that the Department would spare no effort in responding to the international community's expectations of the United Nations. The Organization was a unique forum for promoting development and peace, and enjoyed an increasingly positive image. In that context, it was gratifying to note DPI's co-operation with regional organizations, especially the League of Arab States, and with the developing countries' news agencies, such as the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries. However, it was hoped that due attention would be paid to the issues that were of concern to the international community, such as the cause of Palestine, the eradication of racism and racial discrimination, the halting of foreign occupation, and respect for human rights.

63. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) said that information was a double-edged instrument which, only if used correctly, could foster understanding between countries, contribute to the settlement of conflicts and promote economic and social development. Uganda welcomed the turn of events in international relations and hoped that the change would also prove beneficial to the developing countries. During the cold war, information had been used to perpetuate divisions, widen spheres of influence and implement policies of domination and hegemony to the detriment of the poor countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. In the course of the conflicts that had broken out in the South, the information disseminated - distorted to serve ideological interests - had diverted attention away from the real problems of the peoples of the regions concerned instead of helping to resolve them. Consequently, Uganda cherished the hope that, with the end of the cold war, one of the major factors that had exacerbated conflicts in the African region, the African countries could evolve their own social, political and economic systems founded on democratic principles.

64. Information was clearly vital in making the international community aware of the fundamental principles of any democratic process. In his delegation's view, there were no models of democracy that could be exported wholesale, which was why the media should confine their action to helping to evolve endogenous systems of democracy.

65. With the beginning of a phase of co-operation between East and West, in a multi-polar world which had seen the emergence of large trading blocs in the affluent North, like the European Economic Community, the advantages and disadvantages of those developments in terms of the new economic, social and information order must be carefully weighed up. Those developments might relegate the third world to the margins of world attention and exclude them from the mainstream of international trade, investment and technological development, thereby reinforcing existing imbalances in information. That eventuality must be avoided and endeavours should be made to ensure that the changes led to the strengthening of international co-operation for the benefit of all humanity.

66. The new world information and communication order which the non-aligned countries advocated was designed to bridge the gap between the developed and the developing countries and to ensure a two-way, balanced flow of information.

(Mr. Irumba, Uganda)

Regrettably, their call for a new order had been wilfully misinterpreted as a challenge to the free flow of information. Nothing could be further from the truth, since the intention was to ensure that freedom was exercised by all, whereas information was currently controlled by a handful of news agencies in the North and the flow of information was only one-way: from the rich countries to the poor.

67. Uganda was gratified that on the whole there was now a better appreciation of the call for a new world information and communication order which would facilitate communication of the matters of concern and the just aspirations of all humanity. Uganda believed in co-operation and sharing of experience between developing countries and accordingly supported the efforts of the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries and the Pan-African news agency. The Department of Public Information should assist those regional institutions.

68. Uganda would support any reform of the Department of Public Information that was in line with General Assembly resolution 41/213, which, moreover, should be seen as a whole. Attention must be paid to the legitimate concern of the staff. In that respect, his delegation reaffirmed its position on the need to achieve equitable geographical representation in the staff of the Department. Uganda also supported the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication and appealed to the international community to increase its contribution to that Programme.

69. His delegation commended the Department for its work for African recovery and development, in which the publication Africa Recovery had played an invaluable role. Uganda attached great importance to the information centres. The Nairobi Information Centre also covered Uganda, and it was regrettable that in spite of the Director's enthusiasm it had not been possible to cover Uganda adequately. An information centre should be established in Namibia as speedily as possible. Uganda regretted that host Governments were expected to contribute to the cost of information centres in the developing countries, while that was not the case in developed countries. With regard to southern Africa, the release of Nelson Mandela and other political leaders would probably bring about more changes. However, the international community should keep on guard and should not relax its efforts until such changes had become irreversible. It was more than ever important for the Department to fulfil its task of promoting the struggle against apartheid. Lastly, his delegation emphasized that the United Nations had an obligation to speed up the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

70. Mrs. SEVIGNY (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information) said that she shared the hope that the Committee on Information, building on the consensus achieved, would provide continuing assistance and guidance in the sessions to come, in order to increase the Department's effectiveness and its capacity to cope with growing information needs. With the unanimous agreement on questions relating to information, a new chapter was opening for concrete action in the 1990s and beyond to promote co-operation for media development in developing countries, as well as freedom of information and an informed public understanding of the Organization's work and purposes.

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(Mrs. Sevigny)

71. She appreciated the support for the programme of opinion polls about the United Nations. She had also noted the concern to have more public opinion polls in the developing countries. The Department was making efforts in that regard and, in addition to the survey in Mexico, had commissioned polls in Kenya, Nigeria, Jordan and Argentina. It expected to publish the results of the Kenya poll shortly and the results of the Nigeria poll soon after. In 1991 the Department planned to undertake polls in a number of Member States in Asia and Latin America, bearing in mind the need to ensure a regional balance among the countries surveyed.

72. The Department was doing everything possible to promote information on all the substantive questions with which the Organization was concerned, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. With regard to further information on the Department's activities relating to specific subjects which some delegations considered priorities, she emphasized the work on apartheid and the Palestinian question, the articles in the UN Focus series, the publication Africa Recovery, and the documents and booklets on the world economy and the international debt. Demand had been so great for the latter two that the Department had had to reproduce the documents in book form. She also referred to the Department's work in connection with the publication Objective: Justice and the question of traffic in narcotics.

73. With regard to the coverage of special events and the commemoration of the Organization's forty-fifth anniversary, the anniversary had been celebrated with public events and information activities in many parts of the world. The Department had received reports on activities from information centres in Geneva, Vienna, Sydney, Manila, Cairo, Moscow, Rio de Janeiro, Paris, Belgrade, Bangkok and other cities.

74. The Department noted with satisfaction the positive comments on the quality of its teaching guides about the United Nations and welcomed the suggestion that they should be incorporated into the curricula of secondary schools in Member States. The public opinion polls carried out by the Department had revealed that the majority of people polled had learned about the United Nations in secondary school.

75. Several representatives had referred to the languages used in both printed and audio-visual information products. During 1990 alone, 110 publications, 19 posters, and other display material had been produced and distributed, with a circulation of between 1,000 and 100,000 copies each. Of the 110 English publications, 63 had also been issued in both French and Spanish, 12 in Arabic, 11 in Chinese and 14 in Russian. Several of them had been issued in other languages too. The Department had issued 366 press releases in French and English between January and June 1990. The Department's radio broadcasts were produced in 21 languages and the major television programmes, such as UN in Action or World Chronicle, were produced in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

76. Requests had been made for the training programme for journalists and broadcasters to benefit more countries. Supervisory requirements and funds available to the Department would preclude the admission of more than 20 trainees a year. However, the Department would continue to include as many developing countries as possible in future programmes, on a rotating basis.

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77. With regard to broadening the Department's co-ordination of information activities within the United Nations system, through the Joint United Nations Information Committee, that Committee had reviewed common activities at its latest session in Geneva. It had established a group to review the future of Development Forum. The Department was also working closely with the secretariat of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and with members of the Committee to design and implement a multi-media information campaign.

78. The Yearbook of the United Nations had been criticized. She was concerned about the backlog in the production schedule of the Yearbook and said that the Department had never been meant to be an archival office. It had explored various options for improving the situation and during the year had embarked on a comprehensive review of the operation. She thanked the permanent missions which had responded in a constructive and helpful manner to the questionnaire on that publication.

79. With regard to annual conferences for non-governmental organizations, she noted with satisfaction the suggestion that conferences should be held in different regions of the world. The Department was studying the possibility and would accordingly be embarking on consultations with non-governmental organizations, since, owing to financial limitations, the holding of meetings away from Headquarters would depend on the assistance provided by the host country and the non-governmental organizations concerned.

80. There had been many expressions of support for and interest in the work of the information centres. At the Information Centre in Dar es Salaam, the duties of director had been performed by the UNDP Resident Representative because of the lack of resources made worse by the 1987 budgetary cuts. Nevertheless, there was evidence that the Centre was functioning and information was being received periodically from the United Republic of Tanzania. Regarding the Information Centre in Tehran, the Department had already initiated action to recruit an information assistant who would work and co-operate with the UNDP office there. Any suggestions by the Iranian Government on how to improve the Centre's efficiency would be welcome. The Information Centre in Ouagadougou was one of the most active in Africa. Its main purpose was to service the ministries, the media, the non-governmental organizations and the universities, and it organized film shows and information days in the rural areas of Burkina Faso. Despite the budgetary constraints, DPI would do everything possible to provide that Centre with the necessary means to extend its activities to all the regions of the country. At the Information Centre in Dhaka, again because resources had been curtailed, the UNDP Resident Representative would be performing the duties of centre director. The post of information assistant had been kept, although the officer who had filled that post had been promoted to a Professional post in the Department in New York. Steps had been taken to recruit an information assistant, whose duties were being performed in the interim by the reference assistant. Under the administration of the UNDP Resident Representative, the level of activities of the Centre in Dhaka had remained unaffected. Efforts were being made to strengthen the existing good relations with government officials, the media and non-governmental organizations,

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seminars were held and activities organized in observance of United Nations Days and Weeks, and services were provided through the printed media, radio and television. Bulgaria, Poland and Yemen had expressed interest in opening information centres in their capitals. If the General Assembly agreed and provided the necessary financial resources, DPI would have no difficulty in meeting those requests. The efficiency of the information centres that serviced more than one country had been questioned. DPI would do its best to cope with that situation, although again the financial constraints would have to be borne in mind. As to the Department's efforts to modernize equipment and computerize operations, the aim was to modernize operations in all the information centres wherever national technological conditions allowed.

81. DPI had local staff in 67 countries and international staff and directors in 35. Of the 67 centres for which it had direct responsibility, 13 were in the more industrialized countries where UNDP was not represented and 54 in the less developed countries where UNDP had offices. Of those 54, 22 were administered by UNDP.

82. In view of the great interest expressed by many delegations in United Nations information centres and services, she wished to add a number of comments in a wider perspective. For 15 years prior to 1988, the demand for more information had not been at its highest point; not even at the height of the United Nations credibility crisis had a Government requested the closure of an information centre; for more than 40 years, technical specialization and professional expertise had never been the only criteria used in recruitment; General Assembly resolution 1405 (XIV) of 1 December 1959 concerning tangible support from Governments to information centres had never been implemented with firmness; recent United Nations achievements and the quality of the information material required were placing additional pressure on the centres. Because of obsolescence of the working conditions, a phased approach in the field had been chosen, with the establishment of regional desks at Headquarters and relations were being strengthened with other United Nations agencies and programmes, especially UNDP. At the same time, operations were being modernized and staff reduced. Having inherited 40 years of difficulties, she had tried, together with the newly appointed Director of Information Centres Division, to revitalize the information network in the field and to motivate staff, and there was no doubt that solid progress had been made.

83. A number of specific measures had been taken by the Department to improve the operation of the information centres. Regional meetings of information centres were being held more frequently to enable them to exchange experiences, to examine their problems at closer range and to enable work at Headquarters and in the field to be co-ordinated more effectively. In the past three years, meetings had been held in all the regions and at a saving to the United Nations, because they had been partially hosted by a Member State. She thanked the Governments of Morocco, the Soviet Union, Tunisia and the Philippines for hosting the meetings in their respective regions. Training seminars for local staff had been intensified and equipment had been modernized, with the installation of, inter alia, facsimile machines in 59 centres and PCs in 34, 22 of which were linked to Headquarters by an

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electronic mail system. During the current year, that system would be connected with eight other countries and more than 50 centres would be equipped with PCs by the end of the year. Rotation of directors was at the core of the programme. In the past three years, new directors had been appointed to 87 per cent of the centres; four directors were still to be replaced and another four were being appointed in November 1990.

84. Measures had been taken to work closely with other members of the United Nations family, especially through the Joint United Nations Information Committee. The relationship between field offices of DPI and UNDP needed special attention. An initial understanding had been reached jointly the previous year and had been tested in the field for 12 months. It was agreed that UNDP resident representatives would receive thorough public information briefings before assuming duties, which would be important in countries with no information centres. She had decided that, in those countries, the information material should be sent directly to local radio and television stations and the printed material to UNDP offices. In response to the claims by certain delegations that the material sent directly was not reaching its destination, she promised to monitor the situation personally.

85. A number of centres, with support from Headquarters, had succeeded in obtaining regular slots on radio and television programmes in host countries. Centres were encouraged not only to distribute the material produced in New York but also to adapt it to the interests and needs of each country. Many countries were directly providing the centres with subsidies for the translation and sometimes delivery of material. Information had also been prepared with academic and intellectual communities in mind and several centres had arranged to have studies on the United Nations included in the regular curriculum.

86. She had visited 36 countries and could say without hesitation that while conditions were far from ideal, the approach taken had been the right one. During those visits she had also confirmed the importance of reaching out to the public through radio and television programmes and of teaching about the United Nations at the secondary level. Out of 67 operating centres, about 40 had been provided by the host countries with material help. A special document was being prepared on the subject for distribution to all Member States. She thanked those countries which had given their support and urged the others which had not yet met their initial commitment to make every effort to do so in the immediate future. She also requested those Governments which were not providing facilities and services to the centres to do so, even partially.

87. DPI was well aware of the problems and wished the international community to know what the limitations were. Any suggestions for improving the situation would be welcome. If 150 countries were each to be provided with a centre, the budget for the centres would have to be tripled, from about $20 million to about $60 million. Such an investment would be impossible, but the lack of resources could be compensated for by professionalism, flexibility in staffing and more active management. Another point to be borne in mind was the need for advance planning. It was completely unproductive to be confined strictly to a

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predetermined calendar of about 45 annual events relating to United Nations Decades, Years and Days, in addition to mandatory exhibits.

88. Some delegations had referred to specific difficulties in staffing their centres. It was public knowledge that the whole United Nations system had undergone a retrenchment operation. However, some flexibility was needed in recruiting the necessary Professional staff for certain assignments. Further flexibility was required in the classification of posts and in the entry level of recruitment of local Professional staff. In that connection, DPI had initiated action to improve the levels and classification of posts, and a working group dealing with those matters would be making some recommendations.

89. DPI would continue trying to ensure that the centre directors and the regional desk officers at Headquarters worked harmoniously to achieve the desired level of efficiency. It was encouraging to note that many agencies, including UNDP, were asking DPI to carry out activities through its centres. Obvious progress had been made but additional resources were required to purchase and distribute material, design appropriate projects and monitor input as well as output.

90. A number of delegations had expressed concern about the geographical distribution of Department staff. The situation was expected to improve, even though DPI already stood rather well when compared to the desirable mid-points established for the Secretariat as a whole. With regard to the representation of women at Professional and senior levels, DPI was in a better position than most other departments. Nevertheless, vigorous efforts were being made to appoint more women as centre directors.

91. Lastly, she reiterated that flexibility was a central question. She commended the attitude of those delegations that had supported her call for flexibility in managing the Department.

92. Mr. ISAKSSON (UNESCO Liaison Office with the United Nations) said that UNESCO noted with great satisfaction that there appeared to be a full consensus on the draft resolutions proposed for the Committee's consideration. UNESCO's new strategy for the development of communications and the free flow of information had the same goal and priorities as those of the draft resolutions.

93. UNESCO had taken note of the constructive comments made by many members of the Committee with regard to its International Programme for the Development of Communication, which would be conveyed to UNESCO headquarters in Paris along with specific proposals, such as the suggestion that UNESCO and DPI, in preparing the African press seminar, should contact the Cairo-based Institute for the Training of African Journalists.

94. UNESCO would continue to work closely with the Department in its own fields of competence.

Draft resolutions A/SPC/45/L.8 and L.9

95. Mr. FASEHUN (Nigeria), speaking as Chairman of the Committee on Information, introduced draft resolutions A/SPC/45/L.8 and L.9, entitled "Information in service of humanity" and "United Nations public information policies and activities" respectively, a result of constructive and cordial consultations with the spokesmen for the regional groups and China. Both texts had been drafted by the Committee on Information at its twelfth session and a preamble had been added to each to incorporate elements from the report of the Committee on Information (A/45/21) and the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/45/533).

96. It was to be hoped that the consensus reached would contribute to ensuring that concrete assistance, both bilateral and multilateral, would be given to the developing countries and would mean more resources for DPI so that the Department could confront the enormous changes taking place in the area of information and communication, where such advances were an integral part of development. He reiterated the need for unofficial quarterly consultations between the officers of the Committee on Information and the Department's secretariat.

97. The CHAIRMAN said that the activities relating to information referred to in draft resolutions A/SPC/45/L.8 and L.9 already appeared in the programme budget for the 1990-1991 biennium; consequently, if the General Assembly adopted those resolutions, they would have no programme-budget implications. If he heard no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt draft resolutions A/SPC/45/L.8 and L.9 without a vote.

98. Draft resolutions A/SPC/45/L.8 and L.9 were adopted without a vote.

99. Mr. ARNOLD (United States of America) said that his delegation was pleased that a consensus had been reached; but consensus connoted harmory, and not necessarily total agreement on all points of a resolution. With regard to the "new world information and communication order", the United States remained opposed to any order that could be interpreted as justifying restrictions, limitations or controls on the activities of journalists, the free flow of information or freedom of opinion.

100. Furthermore, certain parts of the draft resolutions referred to situations that were no longer as described. Paragraph 1, subparagraph (2) (e), of draft resolution A/SPC/45/L.9 referred to official censorship imposed on the local and international media with regard to the policies of apartheid. Although the United States remained totally opposed to apartheid, it was gratified at the measures taken by the Government of South Africa to begin rescinding censorship, which was a step towards democracy. It was to be hoped that when the Committee met in 1991, official censorship in South Africa would have been totally abolished.

101. The best way for the Committee on Information to fulfil its task of providing orientation would be by granting a degree of discretion and flexibility to DPI. That called for increased co-operation and consultation between that Committee and the Department, and for considerable attention to existing resources and capacity in order to help the Committee fulfil its mandate.

102. The CHAIRMAN said that the representative of the United States wished to speak in exercise of the right to reply.

103. Mr. ARNOLD (United States of America) said that the delegation of Cuba had once again referred to an issue that was being discussed by another United Nations body, the International Telecommunication Union. He looked forward to hearing the comments of the representative of Cuba on the evening news of Radio Habana, whose programmes could be listened to without jamming in the United States.

104. The representative of Cuba had said that the Government and people of Cuba opposed United States radio broadcasting to Cuba. Whereas the Government was undoubtedly against such broadcasts, it would remain impossible to know whether the people of Cuba were also opposed until such broadcasts reached Cuba and could be heard there. He quoted the opinion of Mr. Julio García Luis, leader of the Cuban Journalists' Union, who, in an interview with Juventud Rebelde, the official paper of the Communist Youth of Cuba, had said that it had been eloquently demonstrated that the officialist, apologist and uniform press system had exhausted its possibilities and that if the political and economic system of Cuba was to be improved, the country's mass media must be reformed permanently. It was to be hoped that the time would come when the officials or the people of Cuba would express their gratitude to the nations that broadcast programmes inspired by freedom of thought, just as the leaders and peoples of other countries had already done.

105. Mr. MORA GODOY (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the United States delegation was unable to refute Cuba's arguments, which were based on the opinion of the International Telecommunication Union establishing that the actions of the United States had constituted violations of the International Telecommunication Convention, adopted in Nairobi in 1982, to which the United States was a party.

106. As to the misnamed Radio Martí, the same thing had been happening with it over the past five years as with Televisión Martí. Radio Martí broadcast to Cuba at the frequency-modulation band of 1,180 kHz, but it was not a commercial station, like the more than 20 United States stations that could be heard in Cuba.

107. For many years, Cuba had sought to settle the issue through discussions and negotiations: the champions of freedom of information should either abandon their objective of imposing their views on the rest of the world or should apply the principles that they regarded as so sacrosanct outside their country, so that Cuba could also broadcast on the medium-wave band to the territory of the United States. To date, it had not been possible to reach a settlement, because whereas the Cuban territory received radio broadcasts on the medium-wave band from the United States 24 hours a day, the inhabitants of the United States were unable to pick up on that same band opinions and information that differed from those predominating in that society.

(Mr. Mora Godoy, Cuba)

108. With regard to the freedom referred to by the United States, if freedom meant that 80 per cent of all children did not know who Bolívar, Jefferson and Lincoln were, that 20 million persons lived below the poverty level and that blacks, Hispanics and Asiatics were regarded as third-class citizens, Cuba did not want that freedom.

The meeting rose at 2.55 p.m.